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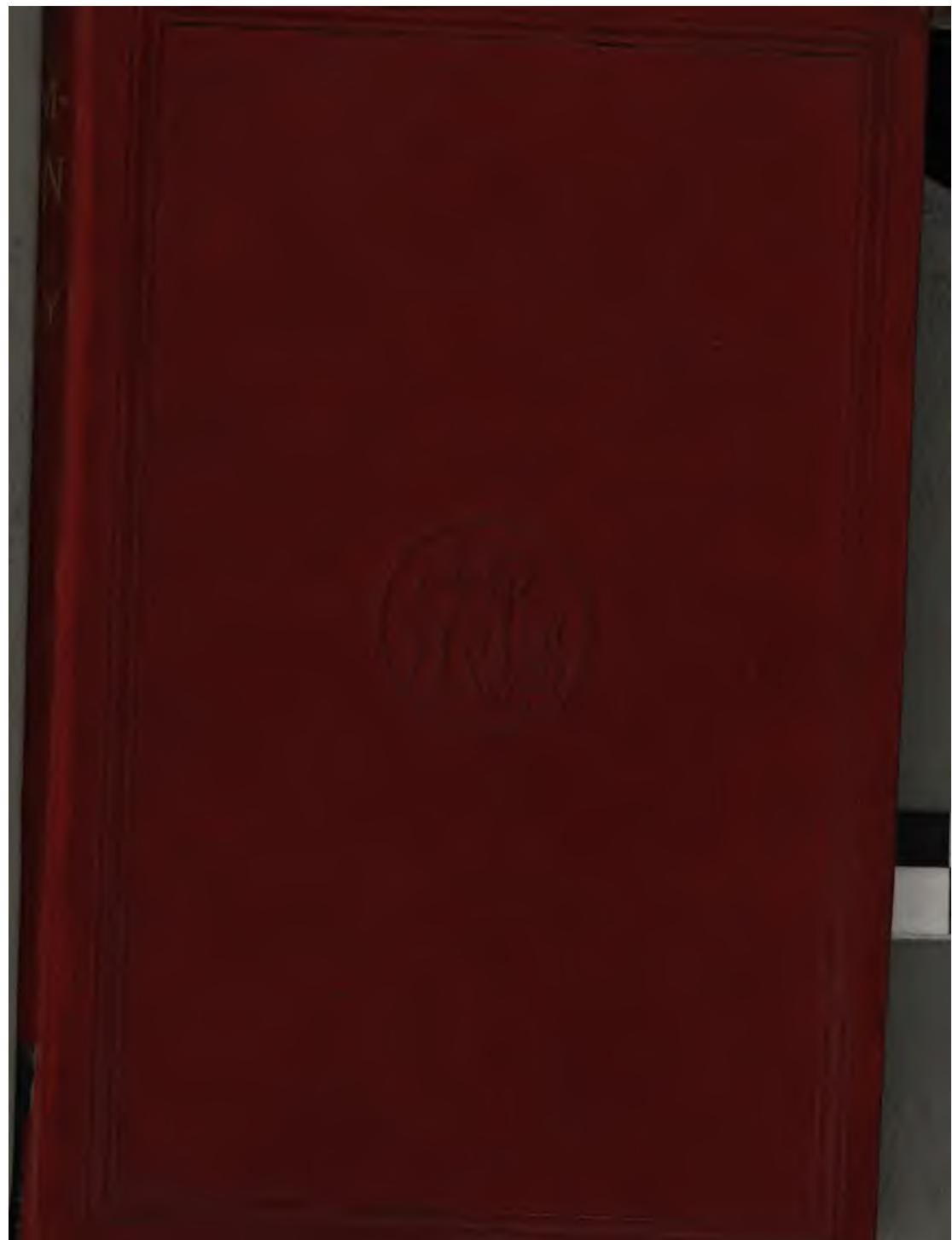
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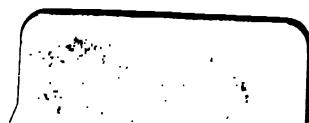
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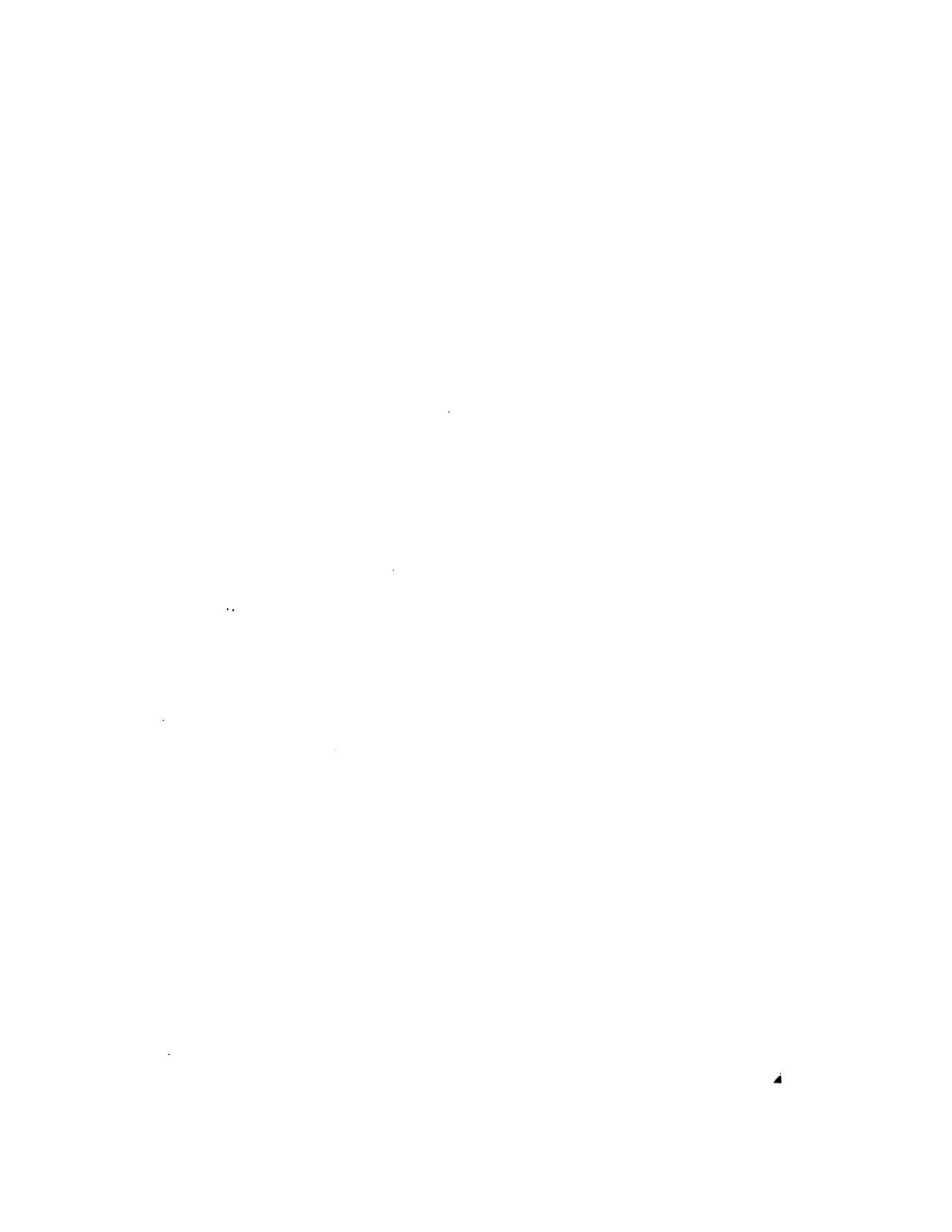
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STORM-DRIVEN.

BY

MARY HEALY,

AUTHOR OF "LAKEVILLE," "A SUMMER'S ROMANCE," "OUT
OF THE WORLD," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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STORM-DRIVEN.

CHAPTER I.

THE BELLE OF THE EVENING.

Mrs. Cox was entertaining her friends, one cold winter night. When Mrs. Cox gave a ball, it was an event in Lakeville. No wonder, for her balls were not like other balls, neither was her house like the houses of ordinary mortals ; neither, for that matter, was she like the women about her. Her acquaintances, when they received, threw open the two parlours, and perhaps a library as well, and the guests went to

the dining-room below, for supper. Mrs. Cox had a suite of drawing-rooms, she never said “parlour;” Mrs. Brown or Mrs. Smith might boast of a strip of hot-house by way of luxury:—Mrs. Cox had, opening from her private boudoir, a conservatory filled with the rarest flowers, and beyond this, a marvel of a winter garden, high enough to admit of a superb palm in the centre, large enough to allow of intricate paths crossing each other in every direction among the tropical plants. The whole was visible in a mysterious half-light. At one end there was a fountain, with water trickling from a rocky background, where played a couple of vividly-coloured Japanese ducks; and in another corner was an immense cage filled with strange, beautiful birds.

The mistress of the house moved among



her guests, bestowing on one a smile, on another a word; followed wherever she went by her own particular set of admirers, composed in general of notabilities. She had been at various European courts, and had conscientiously studied the attitudes and gestures of the different sovereigns, just as an actress studies the minutiae of her part, and she had really not lost her time. She was nearly a head taller than the generality of women, and carried her unusual height well. Her beauty was not above criticism perhaps, but it was of a striking kind; dark hair against a white skin, features regular enough, and the whole so carefully restored by art, as to give still an illusion of youth; so skilfully enhanced too by her peculiar and inimitable style of dress, that the pretensions, which in another woman would have been simply

ridiculous, with her seemed almost justified. Then, what perhaps most helped her to carry out her chosen part, was that, on her bare neck, and in her dark hair, shone and glittered diamonds, which a royal princess need not have disdained. This put her at once on a different footing from her neighbours, who mostly had not been rich long enough to possess more than a few of those glittering baubles.

It was no wonder that, while Mrs. Cox slowly advanced with her studied smile, and her graceful bend of the neck, there should mingle with the admiration she excited, much hatred, malice, and uncharitableness. She was quite as well aware of the envy as of the admiration, and enjoyed one perhaps as much as the other.

The couples wandering from the ball-room passed slowly to and fro ; they were

mostly young, for married people in Lake-ville were at a discount ; so that the procession was a pretty one to watch. Young girls, fresh and bright-eyed, brushed past the sweet-smelling flowers with which the rooms were lavishly decorated ; rich oriental hangings formed a gorgeous background to the young beauties. The music, softly subdued, followed them with caressing modulations, and unconsciously they measured their steps to the time-beats.

Outside, the snow lay crisp and hard ; belated passengers hurried on, shivering, just glancing at the broad stretches of light from the many windows, which made the dark solemn tree-trunks visible, and lighted up the broad gravelled walks of the frozen garden.

“ What a handsome couple ! ” exclaimed

one of a group of wallflowers. "Who are they?"

"A foolish girl playing at being in love, and a young man helping her in the game"—this, from a sharp-eyed woman more plainly dressed than her friends.

"Do you know them?"

"Oh, yes! the girl is Lil Temple."

"Well?"

"Well? why nothing more. Lil is but a blank page as yet; in a few years we shall see what she will turn out to be. She is merely expectant now. Men like blank pages."

"Because they can best write, their names on such."

"Precisely. There are girls who write down something of their own accord, but those never 'succeed in society,' as it is called; take her sister Martha for instance,

—who is worth ten of Lil, and who, at a party, acts wallflower almost as much as though she were married like ourselves—or my Issy, who is clever, and knows it! Men do not like clever girls—”

“ And who is he? ”

“ By profession a handsome man; by accident the nephew of an eccentric old fellow who allows him ten thousand dollars a-year, and who, as likely as not, will not leave him a cent when he dies. America is not good enough for Mr. Leigh Ward as a usual thing, and I am of opinion that he is not good enough for America. We do not want fine idlers among us, there is no place for them. He makes verses, he is a musician, sings not too badly, composes too, and if by chance he had to depend on any one of his accomplishments for his daily bread, he would risk

greatly to die of hunger. His poet-nature despises shops and offices, and the low creatures who therein resort. He is always in love, and always with the belle of the place and moment; it is Lil's turn now—”

“ You are hard on Mr. Ward,” said another lady who had not yet spoken, “ he is a very charming young man.”

“ Of course he is, otherwise Mrs. Cox would not have given him a place of honour in her court or ‘ ménagerie,’ as she herself calls it.”

“ Oh, indeed, is—?” and the questioner stopped discreetly.

“ My dear, you are evidently a new comer; no, certainly not! no one has a right to question Ann Cox's reputation; she went into partnership with virtue when she married, and the firm has prospered. Excellent business woman! supe-

rior business woman ! She always places her capital at the very highest and surest interest. Old Cox, whom honest men shrank from shaking by the hand, was tenderly proud of his wife's untainted reputation ; he proved it by leaving her every cent of his enormous and ill-gotten wealth."

" But now ? "

" Now ? Once a habit taken, you know, it is all smooth sailing enough ; besides, she laughs at sentiment ; love seems to her a comical delusion ; she was born with a bag of gold in the place of a heart, and there is wisdom in her prudence. Some day when she finds a very big title, and a name of fine-sounding syllables, she will marry again, to make people forget that she was ever called by one spelled with but three letters."

At that moment the hostess passed by

with her slow stately step; she stopped before the group of gossiping women, and found something pleasant to say to each. There was not one who did not respond gladly to her advance, not one who was not flattered by the attention bestowed.

“They had been tearing me to pieces,” said Mrs. Cox, with a good-natured laugh, as she passed on, leaning on the arm of a tall handsome man; “and will begin again in a moment—I saw it on their faces,” and she laughed again, it really amused her.

The prediction was fully realized.

“I suppose it’s her diamonds,” groaned Mrs. Richards, her black bead eyes gleaming with comical despair; “no woman can resist their glitter, and we all naturally bow down before their lucky possessor; even I—I who knew Ann when she and I were poor girls together, she poorer than I

then, for we are just of an age—yes! you do not believe it, but it is true. I used to patronize her; now she crushes me, she annihilates me with her patronage, and I submit to it, and all because she is rich, whereas I am poor. Mr. Richards has no luck, he never had."

"Not even, on his wedding-day?"

"Not even then, dear! Here, John, come and find my self-respect for me; I lost it just now in the crowd."

The young man she familiarly called "John," advanced, and took a chair by her side. He was not as Mrs. Richards had said of another "by profession a handsome man;" there was nothing but the expression of his fine deep-set eyes to redeem his face from positive plainness.

"How did you come to lose that very useful article?" asked he, smiling; the

women about him decided that his was not an ordinary smile, and they were right.

“By licking the dust before the queen’s feet—I! the very perfection of democracy! But let us speak of something else. I hear you are getting to be a favourite in our world; fine ladies go to your painting-room, and vow that you are charming when there are not too many people near. Your timidity is a sham! you have taken me in—”

“I think not. If you knew how out of place I feel here to-night; how well I know that I am not one of these fine idlers; how delightful my shabby studio seems to me, in comparison with these gorgeous rooms—”

“Then why do you stay?”

For an instant the young man was unable to find an answer. A slight flush

passed over his face. Then quickly he said,—

“ Because I was waiting for an opportunity to speak to you.”

“ You are making decided progress, my dear young friend. I might tell you that I have been here in my corner all the evening, not having been overwhelmed with attentions—but I won’t. Why do you not come and see us? Issy has finished several drawings, and made some sketches which she wishes to show you.”

“ I have been very busy; I am preparing to return to Paris, but I will certainly call. Tell Miss Issy whatever she does, never to work, except from nature.”

Even while he spoke his eyes wandered from group to group uneasily. Mrs. Richards, whom nothing escaped, said,—

“ Not that way. She must be in the

conservatory, I should guess, with Leigh Ward."

Once more the slight flush passed over his face, and after a few more words he sauntered away, not in the direction of the conservatory.

Mrs. Richards had spoken of John Bruce's growing popularity ; but as the young man moved about, almost unnoticed in the crowd, that popularity was certainly not very apparent. The truth was that, in Mrs. Cox's circle, he was still almost unknown ; the fashionable world accepts reputations already made, but it has no time to seek out obscure talent. Yet, there was a certain interest attaching to John's history—an interest which a man of less simple nature would have turned to good account.

Some eighteen years before, when Lake-ville was still a straggling, ill-kept, pros-

perous, and vastly ambitious young town, a physician, Dr. Bruce, had arrived from the East, with his wife and two young children, determined to make his fortune. He took a very tall, very ill-built, but very showy frame-house, at a high rent, caused a very big brass plate to be fastened to his front door, and confidently awaited the crowds of patients which should have hastened to him. Perhaps the Lakevillites had no time to be ill; perhaps they were satisfied with their own doctors; perhaps they were displeased at the superciliousness with which the Boston man looked at all things appertaining to the West;—at any rate, Dr. Bruce waited in vain for the crowds that were to make his fortune. Some land speculations, which were to have made a rich man of the doctor, proved disastrous; debts became pressing, and,



when things were beginning to look very very black indeed, the unfortunate man suddenly died, leaving nothing but debts behind him.

Mrs. Bruce had no time to mourn over the death of her husband, of whom she had been passionately fond ; she had her children's bread to earn. She had studied medicine a little with the poor doctor, and she went out as nurse. John, who was but a little fellow at the time, understood with the precocity which poverty gives to children, that he also must earn money. One evening he came home with a handful of coppers, which he poured in his mother's lap ; he had become a news-boy, and shouted "*Tribune*, sir ? Here's your *Evening Post* ! " with hearty good-will and proportionate success. But at night, and during all the leisure moments which he

could secure, he would draw, make heads, animals, compose little scenes ; this had been a passion with him ever since his earliest childhood—a passion which his father, proud of his son's real talent, had encouraged, but which now caused his mother to shake her head. What could it lead to ? Perhaps her reasoning, and the hard necessities of life, would at last have triumphed, and John might have become a counter-jumper, had not, by good luck, a famous painter from Boston—a man as full of kindness as of talent—paid a long visit to Lakeville. John, then almost a young man, went, with beating heart and flushed cheeks, to the artist, and begged him to look at his sketches. “Where did you learn to draw like that ?” asked the painter, greatly interested ; and when John had told his story, had spoken of the obstacles

in his way, he grew still more interested. The result was, that a few months later, John was on his way to Paris ; a number of rich men, Mr. Temple at their head, had clubbed together, and secured to him the means of studying for five years in peace. He had not lost his time, and already those who had leisure to think about such things, were beginning to be proud of the Lake-ville painter.

Mr. Leigh Ward, in his travels, had seen many beautiful women, of widely differing types ; but as he looked at the young girl by his side, his artistic nature was satisfied, even when he compared her with those other women. Yet Lil was not strictly beautiful ; she was merely pretty, very fresh, and her movements were perfectly graceful ; she had a peculiarity which arrested attention ; her eyes were very

blue, while the eyelashes which shaded them were black, and the heavy hair quite dark. She was usually too pale, as is often the case with her fair countrywomen, and her delicately cut features were wanting a little in individuality ; still, Mr. Ward, who was a connoisseur, was satisfied. He listened, well pleased, to her talk, which was not very original perhaps ; but then her voice was unusually low and sweet—refreshingly so in a land where the prettiest women often destroy the charm they ought to exert, by their shrill, loud talk. He was not in love with this charming girl ; but then, playing at being in love is not a disagreeable game ; his imagination was roused pleasantly, and imagination on certain occasions is a very good substitute for the heart.

The two were slowly making their way

among the graceful plants of the winter garden, Lil's white dress brushing against the big deep green leaves. There were but few wanderers here, and these kept discreetly at a distance.

"But you who have been everywhere," Lil was saying, "in the East, in Italy, in France, must find Lakeville very tame, and Lakeville people very provincial."

"I do not think that anywhere could be found a paradise more lovely than this, or boasting so fair an Eve."

"I wish you would not pay me compliments," said Lil, looking at him with her frank innocent eyes.

"Why not?" he answered, smiling at her earnestness. "Would you rather have me say, with brutish frankness, 'Pon my word, Miss Temple, you're a devilish pretty girl'? What you call compliments is but

a way of dressing up what one wishes to say ; mere courtesy, which is the ornament of life, necessary to it, just as a gilt frame is necessary to enhance the value of a picture. I confess it honestly, I would care much less for the picture without its frame. Would you not ? Do you not think this pretty dress of yours is more becoming than the cotton gown of your kitchen-girl ? Do you believe that beauty unadorned is adorned the most ? I don't. Do you believe in love in a cottage ? I don't."

" I do not know what I believe ; I have never thought it out," said Lil, who was scrupulously honest. " What I know is, that I pity all girls who cannot go to balls like this one—who cannot stand where we are standing, and enjoy what we are enjoying. I am afraid I should make a very mediocre poor girl. I do not like work ; I

do not like the cold. I should always like to be potted and made much of by those about me."

" And you always will be. It is impossible to come near you without submitting to the charm you exert—without wishing to make you happy. Flowers are made for sunshine, and sunshine for flowers. There is not one of the men you have danced with this evening, who is not, or who does not fancy himself, in love with you."

" Not one?" said Lil, with a child-like coquetry which made the man of the world smile again. Then she added quickly, " But if I had come in a plain muslin dress, made by myself—if I had been the daughter of a poor man, a little nobody, would it have been the same thing?"

“ No, certainly not ; the picture would have been frameless.”

Lil shivered a little. She glanced at the snow outside ; the moon was looking at them coldly, through a network of bare black branches ; it was very cheerless out there, and Lil hurried on.

“ I am very glad that I am not a poor girl. I feel sorry for those who have not all the good things of life, but I would not give my place to another. All that is not very noble, I know. I am not heroic ; perhaps not even of average goodness. . . . I wonder what life holds in store for me ? How strange not to know ! how dreadful that there should be a great black curtain before the future—a curtain one cannot lift ! ”

“ I will lift it for you, if you like.”

Lil started ; she was a little nervous that

evening. What was he going to say? his looks, and his attitude were those of a lover, even though his words had not yet gone beyond what is admissible in a flirtation.

“What do you mean?”

“I had an old negro nurse, something of a witch I think, and she taught me to tell fortunes. Shall I tell yours?”

“Yes,” said Lil.

He led her to a seat half-hidden among tall shrubs, just by the fountain, where the Japanese ducks, fancying it was daytime, pursued each other, half flying, half swimming. Mr. Ward was going to unbutton Lil’s glove, but quickly and a little nervously she bared her hand herself. Such a pretty dainty hand! No wonder the young man, pretending to study the soft pinky palm, kept it long in his. He wanted terribly to kiss it, but this he did not do.

“ Well ? ” questioned Lil.

“ I see many things here.”

But what those things were, Lil was not then to know. Yet surely it was a pity to lose the result of such deep study. He was bending over the hand, occasionally looking up at her eyes, that sought his ; eyes in which hovered some faith in the mysterious art he professed.

They were interrupted, and considerably startled by a laugh sounding close to them ; Mrs. Cox stood looking on, with evident amusement.

“ It is really too bad of me, is it not ? but there are signs of a revolt in the ball-room. Lil’s disappointed partners are all clamouring for her. You see, my love, if belleship has its delights, it has its duties too. Come ! ” and with a sort of imperiousness she took the young girl by the hand

and forced her to rise. As they were entering the boudoir she whispered, "Take care, my pet! Leigh Ward is not a marrying man." Lil walked on by her friend's side. She saw no one, nor did she notice that many glances followed her as she passed on.

Mrs. Richards and her friends were whispering together more eagerly than ever; they had been joined by Mr. Richards, who bore traces of his ill luck on his meek, cowed face. His hair was not frankly grey, but of so peculiar a colour that it made one think that life to him had been a perpetual Ash Wednesday. At that moment, however, he was not being snubbed; on the contrary, he had become a person of ephemeral but real importance; he had brought with him a piece of news, and it was that piece of news over which the

ladies were whispering, casting many glances at Lil and at Leigh Ward, who was following in her wake.

It is such a pleasant thing to be queen of a ball, when one is nineteen, fresh and pretty! Lil, as she danced, as she merrily answered the pretty speeches addressed to her, forgot the ill-omened whisper of her hostess, forgot everything, save that she was happy and admired, that Mr. Ward followed her with his eyes, and smiled when she looked at him.

There was another young man who also followed her with his eyes. John Bruce had not yet left the ball; he had caught the whisper which now ran from group to group, and he tried once to approach the young girl: but she was so surrounded that it was difficult. She saw him, however, and nodded with a pleasant smile.

"Give me just five minutes, Miss Temple," he said.

"I cannot. I am so very sorry! why did you not ask me before?"

He hesitated a little, then he added in a lower voice, "It is late—later than you think, you will wear yourself out."

She looked at him astonished. John Bruce presuming to give her advice! Then suddenly seeing something strange in his face, she said quickly, "Mother is worse!"

"Oh! no, no!" and he turned away, angry with himself for his want of tact. What must she think of him?

She did not think anything at all about him, for at that moment Leigh Ward claimed a promised waltz. There was something intoxicating in the music, in the smell of the flowers, in the heat, in the sight of other whirling couples: she aban-

doned herself to the guidance of her partner, with half-closed eyes, feeling that she could go on dancing thus for ever, supported by his encircling arms.

“ Shall I tell you what I saw in your hand ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ I saw that love is near to you, that the unconsciousness of your girlhood is about to be dispelled, as the summer mists are dispersed by the sun. Are you sorry that it should be so ? are you afraid ? ”

They were still dancing, but more slowly ; it was a softly cadenced movement.

“ Why do you ask ? ” she murmured, just above her breath.

“ Because I long for your answer—because it seems to me that I am a different man since I looked at that bewitching criss-cross in your hand—say—are you afraid ? ”

Then suddenly she remembered Mrs. Cox's warning; she woke as from a half-trance, and said, "If you care really to know, I will tell you to-morrow."

The ball was drawing to a close; wax candles were dying among the flowers, the older women looked fagged and haggard, but Lil, as she took leave of her hostess, was as fresh as ever, only there was an unusual flush in her cheeks which was singularly becoming. Less than ever did she notice the looks of those about her, and the whispering which went on, as the women threw their wrappings over their crushed dresses.

CHAPTER II.

THE REVERSE OF THE MEDAL.

“ COME here, daughter ! ” said Mrs. Temple, in her feeble invalid’s voice ; she was a Southerner, and had retained the quaint Southern speech. She had been a beautiful woman, but now her thin, white face was pitiful to see ; the doctors said that it was only Martha’s constant care that kept her mother alive.

“ What is it, mother ? ” and Martha bent over the sick woman tenderly, her plain, intelligent, sensible face softened by a great pity.

“ How did Lil look this evening? pretty ? ”

“ I think Miss Lillian was not dissatisfied with her personal appearance ; but I do not know which she most approved of, her face or her new dress.”

“ She might have come to show herself,” said the mother, with an invalid’s fretfulness.

“ You were sleeping, dear,” and she kissed her, as she would have kissed a sick child. “ Do you feel worse ? ” she added, as Mrs. Temple moaned wearily.

“ I don’t know—it is such hard work to breathe ; in the daytime the air seems less heavy—” there was a pause, during which Martha went lightly here and there, putting things to rights. The room was a marvel of comfort and elegance. Mrs. Temple liked pretty things, and her husband never

came back from his constant journeyings without bringing some beautiful object or other ; that was his way of showing his affection, it was an easy way, and it satisfied his conscience. He was accustomed rather to be adored than to adore ; his wife looked upon him as the handsomest, the most generous, dashing, and chivalrous of men, and Lil shared her mother's enthusiasm. Presently Mrs. Temple awoke from a half-sleep, and asked, "What o'clock is it ?"

"Just midnight, mother dear,—time to go to sleep."

"Is there still no news from your father ?"

"No ; since the two despatches last Wednesday, there has been nothing. The telegraph is a convenient thing certainly, but I think old-fashioned letter-writing

must have been more satisfactory, somehow."

"He has no time to write;" then, as Martha did not answer, she went on in a hurt tone, "You are always judging him, Martha; in those old-fashioned times you speak of, children were more respectful than they are now, they understood that there were certain duties which they owed their parents."

"They understand it still, mother, but they understand also that there are certain duties which parents owe their children."

"Is there anywhere a father more generous, more affectionate?"

"He is both, to Lil. Oh! I do not complain, dearest, papa likes everything about him to be pleasant to look at, and pliable; I am neither; I cannot help reasoning about things, and I am not handsome. I do not

think it right for a man to treat the women of his family like children, that are to be petted and made much of at certain moments, and to be sent to the nursery when the serious business of life is to be discussed. We know nothing of papa's affairs—nothing! It was by chance, two years ago, that I discovered that we had been living in the most foolish extravagance, at a moment when absolute ruin was imminent. But I am wrong to speak of such things," she exclaimed, full of remorse as her mother moved uneasily on her pillow. "I have an unfortunate habit of bursting out with whatever comes uppermost in my mind." She stroked and caressed the invalid till she made her smile.

" You are a good girl, Martha."

" Which, in this world, is the next best thing to being a pretty girl, is it not,

mother? Own that you are mortified at having a plain daughter—you, who were the beauty of Baltimore?"

"My dear daughter!" and she took the girl's face between her hands lovingly. "If it were not for the nose," she added, very seriously, "you would not be ill-looking."

Martha laughed; her looks troubled her but little.

Before long, Mrs. Temple fell asleep, and Martha slipped quietly away, after giving many and full directions to the night-nurse.

As she was preparing to enter her own room, Martha met a sleepy servant, holding a telegraphic despatch; it was directed to Miss Temple. She wondered a little, for usually her father sent the telegrams to his wife; she hesitated an instant, deliberating whether she should not take it at once to her mother, on the chance of find-

ing her awake again, but remembering that her sleep had seemed tolerably easy, she determined to wait till morning.

She herself did not open the envelope at once ; she was thinking over her conversation with her mother, questioning herself, wondering whether she had not been wrong. As she mused, she warmed first one foot then the other before the bright fire. Hers was a comfortable room, without the slightest pretensions to being fine ; the two sisters used it as their private sitting-room, and there were books, papers, and feminine work on the table, a piano in one corner, and a few fine engravings on the walls. Martha was fond of her room ; like most people who live very much alone, and with themselves, the place had taken, as it were, something of her physiognomy, of her character.

Leisurely Martha opened the envelope, and glanced at the telegram ; it ran thus :—

“ As morning papers will be full of the sad news, have decided, after consulting with friends, to telegraph at once ; your father entirely ruined by gold panic, committed suicide at noon ; death so instantaneous that he could not have suffered.”

It was signed by a New Yorker, whom she only knew by name.

Martha neither screamed nor lost consciousness ; even at that moment, her first thought was for her mother ; she must hear no sound that might rouse her suspicion, so the brave girl clutched at the mantelpiece for support, and by a strong effort kept off the dizzy faintness which had seized her. It was some minutes before she found strength enough to walk to a chair. Once seated she remained

rigidly upright, feeling that if the tension of her muscles were to give way, she would inevitably lose all self-control; that she would then cry out, and sob, and call for help. As it was, a certain numbness came over her, at which she wondered, asking herself whether she were not heartless. She could not make it out; her intelligence seemed as benumbed as her feelings.

He was dead, he had killed himself, and they were penniless! This she repeated to herself over and over again, as though it were a lesson she had to learn. By degrees, the sense of the words did penetrate the brain. She saw it all with horrible vividness. The wild excitement, the maniac cries and gestures of the gold speculators, among whom he was; then the despair—everything swept away, no hope left! She knew her father well enough to follow his

agony culminating in madness, for he must have been mad to commit such a deed! so to forget those whom he left behind him—ruined, helpless, and with a name tainted by his act! She tried hard not to judge him, it was horrible to feel anything, at such a moment, but intense pity; yet, unless she admitted his insanity, she could not help judging him, and judging him severely. She then thought of her mother: she shuddered, wondering how she should ever tell her the truth. In such a moment as this, it would have been a great comfort to lean on some one, strong and loving; to weep and moan, and ask for sympathy. But Martha, as she sat there, during those silent hours, with no noise about her save the ticking of the clock and the crackling of the logs, knew that weakness was a luxury forbidden to her. She would have

to be the support of her mother and sister, she would have to be brave for all three ; she did not shrink from the task, she accepted it ; but there came back to her at that moment, the memory of girl-dreams, which had come to her, as they come to all ; yearnings, half-understood, and which she had, as best she could, thrust from her, as though instinct had warned her that they were not destined to be realized. Now, at five-and-twenty, when her life stretched before her plainly—a life which must be filled with stern duties, with work for the daily bread of those she loved—those yearnings came back with tyrannical persistency.

Suddenly Martha started ; a carriage had stopped at the door. Lil was coming home ; she had not thought of this coming home, and was not prepared for it ; yet she

knew that Lil would cross her room to go to her own, which was just beyond. By an instinctive movement she passed her hand over her face, as though she could thus wipe away its ghastly pallor, and the intensely fixed look of the eyes.

It was this movement—the first she had made, since she sat there rigidly—which caused her to notice the telegram, crumpled in her hand; she thrust it hastily into her pocket, then lowered the gas-lamp, so as to make a semi-obscurity in the room.

“She must not know till to-morrow, she must sleep, poor child!” she said this half-aloud, and then started to hear how hollow her voice sounded. She sat down again, feeling very faint and weary.

“Why, Martha! you still up!” exclaimed Lil, as she rustled in, all her pretty finery making a glimmer of white all about her.

Martha looked at her, shuddering; it was not only Lil that stood before her, it was also the incarnation of human happiness.

What was there in common between this bright young creature and disgrace, death, and ruin?

“Is mother worse?” continued Lil, stopping short in sudden alarm, as Martha did not speak.

“Mother was suffering a good deal during the evening, but she fell asleep an hour after you left. I was wakeful, and so remained up for you.” She said this quietly, but her voice was so changed, that she wondered the young girl did not notice it.

Lil took a stool, she was always fond of low seats, and leaning against her sister, meditatively stirred the fire, till a bright flame shot upward. Martha quickly shaded

her face. But Lil saw nothing; suspected nothing; she was thinking of her own affairs.

“Lil, go to bed, dear, you must be tired; it is late.”

“I tired?” and Lil laughed, what had fatigue or weariness to say to her? and, indeed, there was no sign of either in her young face; Martha thought with a pang that she had never seen her sister as lovely as at that moment.

“I do not think one ever feels fatigue when one is very happy,” continued Lil, looking fixedly at the blaze she had made.

“Happy!” exclaimed Martha, the word jarred her unstrung nerves. “You use the expression very lightly, Lil. What! a fine new dress, dancing, compliments, and such like things can make you happy!”

“Don’t be hard on me, Martha.” Lil

was not at all discomposed by her sister's attack ; all she wanted was an occasion to talk and so to find a vent for all the new strange feelings that swayed her.

“ Don't be hard on me, dear ; perhaps I am frivolous, perhaps I do enjoy more than I should, all the good things the fates have bestowed on me ; I do not deny that I am too fond of being admired. But I know as well as you, the real value of these things, and if I am happy to-night, it is not because of these.”

Lil stopped suddenly, and blushed ; she wanted sadly to confess her secret, but words seemed so common and prosaic ; all the joy, and pride, and tender softness that filled her heart, to be translated brutally with “ I am in love ! ” Oh, no ! it was not possible. She rose from her low seat, and walked up and down the room. She turned



up the gas, as though the half-light accorded ill with her feelings. Presently she stopped by the table, and turned over, in an absent mood, the books and papers with which it was strewn; then she said abruptly, "You were never in love, were you?"

"Are you in love?" said Martha with sudden sharpness, facing her sister with an expression of such terror and pity that Lil started; she felt that she was being ill-used, that her confidences, which she would have made to no one else, were not received with enthusiasm, or even with common indulgence.

"How long is it since you have known Mr. Ward? not a month, I think! I have no faith in him," said Martha, in the same hard voice.

"You are unjust!" exclaimed Lil hotly.

"Do you think, if you had been a poor

girl, whom the others did not notice, that he would have made love to you?"

Lil did not answer, she remembered having, a few hours before said almost the same thing herself; she began to be uneasy, and the buoyancy of her feelings subsided; Mrs. Cox's warning also came back to her. She did not answer, but continued playing with the books on the table, then she took up a torn envelope, and absently looked at it, turning it round and round.

Martha, who was watching her, suddenly felt as though all things in the room were whirling in a mad dance. She must speak, she must take Lil's attention away from that bit of paper at all hazards; it was the envelope of the fatal telegram. In a few moments she was able to say in the same constrained voice,—

"Did he ask you to be his wife?"

“ O Martha !” exclaimed Lil with a little gasp, dropping the envelope.

“ Did he tell you he loved you ?”

“ Not exactly ; but he made me understand—” She did not finish the sentence, but nervously took up the paper once more.

“ Then it is, as yet, a flirtation and nothing more ; you know, Lil, as well as I, that a flirtation means a great deal, or just nothing at all, according to the good will of the parties. A girl may lose her heart, and the next day her gay partner may turn on his heel : it was nothing but a flirtation ! A girl may wreck an honest man’s happiness : she was merely amusing herself !”

“ You are not yourself to-night, Martha, something must have happened ; have you had bad news ? By the way, who on earth can have been sending you a despatch ?” and she held up the envelope.



Martha tried to speak but she could not, her power of self-control suddenly deserted her; she could but look at her sister, with wild eyes and a ghastly face.

“Martha,” screamed Lil, and she rushed to her sister’s side; “Martha, what is it?”

“My poor child!” murmured Martha, with infinite pity in her dry eyes.

“Tell me, tell me quickly!” Lil whispered this like a frightened child that she was.

“Not now; to-morrow.”

“To-morrow! you think I can wait till to-morrow? Tell me! you will see that I can be brave too. I must know—I will know! I am not a child to be put off. For God’s sake, speak! is—is mother dead?”

“No.”

“Then there is bad news from father; he has lost a great deal, we shall be poor,

perhaps ruined,—you see, I can talk of it quite sensibly,”—she waited an instant, and then, as Martha only moaned miserably, she said with sudden violence, “ You shall tell me! do you not see that this is worse than anything?”

Martha looked at her, and saw that the moment had really come. She tried to find some words to prepare the young girl, but she found none; the tension all through those dreadful hours had been too great; so she merely took the paper from her pocket, and handed it to her sister. Lil read it, and with a wild cry fell senseless at her sister’s feet.

CHAPTER III.

ORPHANS.

MRS. TEMPLE had had a very restless night, and woke from an uneasy slumber, feverish and ill at ease. Martha always came in at about seven o'clock, but this morning she was late.

"Where is Miss Martha?" asked the invalid plaintively.

The nurse answered that Miss Martha had been up all night with her sister, who was not quite well, and was now trying to get a little rest. Lil not well? The nurse found some difficulty in answering all the



questions that followed ; but she had her instructions from Martha herself, and carried them out well.

When Mrs. Temple's morning toilet was completed she felt better, and asked if there were no letters ; being answered in the negative, she expressed the wish to see the papers. Miss Martha would bring them in presently ; as she always read the news to her mother, the papers had been taken up to her room.

Mrs. Temple insisted, and being met with various ingenious excuses, grew suspicious. With the cunning which comes instinctively to the weak, she took advantage of the absence of the nurse to call the maid who was dusting the room, and to send her for a paper. The girl had been recently engaged and did not dare to disobey.

A few minutes later Martha entered,

having done her best to remove the traces of the dreadful mental agony she had undergone, from her pale face; she even tried to smile. Suddenly she sprang forward—her mother held a crumpled newspaper, and looked towards her with a dazed, frightened look.

“It’s—it’s another Temple, it’s not your father.” She could say no more, a fit of coughing seized her, and the handkerchief she held to her mouth was soon dyed a deep red.

She died towards evening, apparently without suffering much, and certainly without a clear preception of what had happened. Martha was singularly calm; she had no time for weeping. Lil was too ill to leave her bed, delirious at times, so that every thing fell on her, the strong one. The doctor, when all was over, tried to console



her, using the hackneyed words which he had used a thousand times before, on similar occasions;—he was a good man, and meant well. But all she answered was this, “It is best so; she would have missed her luxuries.”

Then came all the horrible details of the funeral; it was she who had to give all necessary orders, she who had to see that everything was properly done; she did not shrink from the task, but sometimes at night, when there was nothing positively to do, it seemed to her that her strength must give way.

Lil soon grew better; her youth and elastic constitution threw off the fever that had seized upon her. Then she had to be told of the new misery that had come to them; she cried bitterly at first, but seeing Martha’s haggard looks, her dry feverish

eyes, she suddenly stopped in the midst of her sobs, and went over to her sister, saying, "Let me help you, dear!" she laid her wet cheek against Martha's caressingly, and then for the first time the elder girl broke down.

There were crowds at poor Mrs. Temple's funeral; the Lakeville heart was moved, the sad story was so complete, that it could not well have been otherwise. What would those two poor girls do now? Even in the hushed and darkened room downstairs, where, on the day of the funeral, the more intimate friends gathered, their future prospects were discussed in decent whispers. In the church there was scarcely standing room, for many who had never seen Mr. or Mrs. Temple, crowded to take their part in the last act of the tragedy.

It is not true that at the first signal of

distress the world abandons the unfortunate ones ; the world does things with propriety and decency ; it has its rules and forms, and knows how to observe them. After a certain time has elapsed—why then . . . that is another thing.

Thus, during those early days of mourning, the tall house on the Avenue, with its closed shutters and deserted look, was literally besieged : friends who insisted on seeing the young ladies—but who were not admitted, for Martha refused obstinately to see any one ; friends who came to inquire ; friends who wrote pretty little notes with many exclamation marks, on fashionably-tinted paper, of a fashionably ugly shape ; friends who merely left cards turned down, to show they had called in person The procession lasted all day, so that the servants took

turns to open the door, and then talked over the cards and notes in the kitchen, before taking them upstairs. Among the cards was one bearing the name of Leigh Ward ; it disappeared somehow from the basket into which it had been thrown with the others.

But there were some visitors that Martha could not refuse to receive,—visitors who would take no denial, who sat obstinately in the hall, till she would admit them. . . . These were tradesmen with their unpaid bills. That her father had always given orders recklessly here and there, she knew, but that he should have left so many debts behind him, seemed scarcely credible. Once, several of these men came together, one of them was a jeweller whose account was a terribly long one ; among the objects not paid for, was a

pretty locket with Lil's initials in diamonds and turquoises; he had given her this costly trifle on her nineteenth birthday. Martha felt very bitterly at that moment, and it was not till she had bent some time over the account that she raised her head, and faced the men who were all watching her in silence. Then she said,—

“ You shall be paid; we will sell everything, even to our clothes, but for God's sake leave us a few days in peace !”

There was something in her voice which forced respect. The creditors bowed and passed out in silence.

The house was unutterably dreary during this time; the showy furniture of the reception-rooms,—Mr. Temple had always liked what was showy—appeared like a doleful mockery in the half-light admitted through the closed blinds; the

pictures on the walls, the bright colours of the carpets were in contradiction with the hushed silence of the place. Lil sometimes left her room to wander among these lower apartments, which already began to have the shut-up odour, and the sense of desolateness, peculiar to deserted houses. What she sought among the fine yellow chairs and sofas, by the shut-up piano, was the memory of her happy and careless girlhood; here, she sat one evening listening to Leigh Ward as he sang and played to her; in that window recess they were having a warm discussion when the door opened, and a visitor was announced; she smiled even in the midst of her sadness, as she remembered his look of comical despair. It was all such trifles so precious to her, which she sought, as she moved softly from place to place.

But during the long sad days, she tried her best to help Martha ; there was much to do, fortunately so, for constant occupation is on such occasions the greatest possible boon. There were many letters to answer, business letters telling mostly of heavy debts ; and there were others also, one from an aunt in Boston whom the girls scarcely knew, who offered shelter and protection to her brother's children ; but the letter was so measured in its expressions of sympathy, so patronizing, so full of sentences that might have figured in her favourite clergyman's best sermon, that when they had read it, the sisters looked at each other without speaking ; at last Martha said,—

“ Shall we accept it, or stay here and work for our living ? I vote for the work—even should it be that of cook or housemaid.”

"I vote for it, too," said Lil, but a little faintly; for if she shrank from the idea of dependence, she shrank also from the thought of hard work, especially of work that was not ladylike.

Then there were accounts to be made out, servants to be dismissed and paid; one only remained until the sale should be over—for there was to be a sale; it was already announced in the papers. But Lil, notwithstanding her excellent resolutions, was not of much use to her sister; she was not clever at casting up long rows of figures, nor did she find the occupation an interesting one; she would often stop and stare at the additions and subtractions through a blinding mist of tears. Once when she was so occupied, and that Martha happened not to be in the room, she heard the clatter of a

horse's hoofs ; she went quickly to the window and peeped out. ;

By the merest chance, as the maid opened the door to receive a card which Mr. Ward was about to leave, Lil came slowly downstairs, and the young man seeing her, bowed seriously. The servant, who knew him to have been a frequent visitor, discreetly withdrew.

“ Miss Temple, how can I express to you the sympathy—”

“ Is it not dreadful ? ” said poor Lil, the tears welling up , she so wanted to be pitied, and especially to be pitied by him ; “ to think that while I was dancing the other evening, poor papa—” she could not go on.

He stood there, hat in hand, a little embarrassed perhaps, but everything in his attitude expressing respectful con-

dolence; the very shade of his gloves, and the severity of his clothes were in accordance with the proper degree of sympathy which he meant to express. But between that degree of sympathy and gushing demonstrativeness there was a wide step, and that step he was in no mood to take. Lil did not, or would not see this; her hand was on the handle of the drawing-room door, as she continued, looking up at him through her tears,—

“ You cannot imagine how dreadful this great, silent house is now! I go about softly, and am afraid to speak above my breath, and all night I lie awake trembling, quite unable to sleep, I am so afraid.”

“ I can readily imagine that—that such a complication of disasters—”

Again he did not finish his sentence.

There came a curious look in Lil's eyes, and quietly she took her hand from the door-handle. During this time he had been saying to himself, in a moralizing mood, that beauty was after all but a fortunate combination of circumstances ; that an unbecoming mass of dead black, a pale face, and red swollen eyes could make of the prettiest girl possible, a very insignificant-looking person.

“ You are very kind, Mr. Ward, my sister and myself are most grateful to all our friends—and acquaintances, for their remembrance of us at this time. I am glad of this chance opportunity of saying so,” then, with a slight bend of the head, she gave him to understand that the “ chance ” interview was at an end. Mrs. Cox herself, need not have disclaimed that bend of the head. He held out his

hand with something more of feeling than he had yet shown.

“ You believe me when I say that I am very, very sorry for you ?”

“ Oh certainly !—why not ?”

Then when he had gone, she slipped into the deserted drawing-room, and hiding herself behind the yellow satin curtains, sobbed as though her heart would break.

“ What is it, dear ?” asked Martha, as her sister, in the dim twilight, crept up to her side, and wearily laid her head against her.

“ I think I am not quite well.”

In the night, the fever that had already attacked her made its appearance once more ; not with great violence it is true, but sufficiently so to condemn the young girl to her bed.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TEMPLE DISASTER.

No, certainly; Lakeville society had not for many a long day had so interesting a subject of conversation as the "Temple disaster," as it was called. There was a flavour of the horrible in it, furnished by the suicide; a touch of real pathos, given by the death of poor Mrs. Temple, who was known to have always adored her husband. Then the probable fate of the two orphan girls gave rise to numberless discussions, which were of a truly interesting character. There were many really kind-hearted people

among the gossips, as there are everywhere; and more than one exclamation of "Poor things!" was uttered with great sincerity. Only these good-hearted people had a thousand duties, cares, or pleasures which, after a short time, caused them to forget the "poor things," and the pity they felt was thus of no very fruitful kind.

Nowhere were the affairs of the Temple girls more thoroughly or more warmly discussed than in Mrs. Richards' circle. This energetic lady was at the head of sewing circles, of Church assemblies, of women's meetings, &c.; she looked upon her mission in life as a talking mission, and it must be owned that she fulfilled it unflinchingly.

One Wednesday afternoon—Wednesday afternoons were devoted to the fabrication

of flannel petticoats and coarse shirts, mostly of an inconvenient cut—Mrs. Richards sat in the midst of a bevy of ladies of varying ages, giving out work and superintending inexperienced sewers. Naturally, as the needles were plied, the tongues kept time, and naturally, also, the late sad events formed the principal topic of conversation.

“Mrs. Cox is very fond of Lil Temple; she cried when she heard the news,” said a stout, comfortable matron.

“Mrs. Cox’s tears,” retorted Mrs. Richards, “are always near her eyes. One of her accomplishments is to cry without sniffling, or making her eyes and nose red; crying, under those circumstances, becomes a graceful feminine art. Besides, we all know how very acute Mrs. Cox’s feelings are; the fear of making herself ill

from over-sensitiveness has prevented her from going to see her pet."

"But she wrote to offer money to the girls."

"Very delicate and considerate on her part. Charity is easy enough when one has more money than one can possibly spend; if she had thought the matter over a little, she would have understood that what the Temple girls need, is not charity, but help to set them to work."

"It seems they will have nothing," said another lady, rolling out the word "nothing" with a sort of lugubrious pleasure.

"Absolutely nothing!" re-echoed a number of voices, and then came quite a solemn little silence; a silence broken suddenly by Issy, otherwise Isabella Richards, a girl of sixteen, who sat outside the circle, at work, in the window corner.



“ Is it not comfortable to talk over other people’s troubles ! ”

Issy hugged herself tight, as she said this, and looked around with an expression of childlike innocence on her whimsical face.

“ Issy ! ” exclaimed her mother severely. Mrs. Richards looked upon sharp speeches as her especial province, and resented any encroachment on her domain. Issy resumed her sewing demurely ; but every now and then her quick black eyes glanced from one to the other of the workers, showing that she judged them all with the relentless severity of youth.

What the girls would do, could do, ought to do, furnished endless variations to the favourite theme.

“ We shall now see which of the two sisters is really up to the circumstances,”

said Mrs. Richards, feeling sure that poor Lil would be found sadly wanting.

“I guess,” said a young lady of uncertain age, who rejoiced in a strong Yankee accent, “I guess Lil Temple won’t see much of her fine lover now.”

“And Lil Temple once out of the field,” observed the irrepressible Issy from her corner, “there may be some chance for other and older competitors.”

“Issy! go and finish your seam in your own room.”

“Certainly, ma’am; with great pleasure,” answered Issy cheerfully, and smiling blandly on the company, the young lady took her departure.

When her daughter had left, Mrs. Richards put down her work and said, “It is all very well to talk about this sad affair; but the principal thing is to know

what we can do to help those girls." By which it will be seen that Mrs. Richards, if she possessed a tongue, possessed also a heart. The only answer to this remark was rather a blank silence.

The lady's sharp eyes danced ; she knew human nature, and had expected this silence ; it rather pleased her to see how well founded were her expectations. She went on, however, quite undaunted,—

"As for me, I am poor, as you all know ; but I will do what I can. There is to be a sale at their house in a few days, and they will then find themselves homeless. I mean to take them in, till they have found some means of earning their bread."

There was a little murmur of approbation among the sewers, which was not unpleasant to the ears of Mrs. Richards ;

but after this, the awkward silence once more fell on the assembly.

“ Well,” said the stout matron who had begun the discussion, and who felt that it was incumbent on some one to say something. “ Well, the Temple girls are well educated; it seems they talk French like natives. I might send my daughters to them if they got up a school, Miss Glover is sadly incompetent; and then, as beginners, the Temples of course would not charge high prices.”

“ Very generous of you, certainly,” said Mrs. Richards drily, and then she turned to the other ladies, not being a woman whom it was easy to discourage. Each replied according to her nature, and it must be confessed that the prospects of the two orphans did not appear very brilliant at the close of the discussion.

Meanwhile the preparations for the sale went on. The fine satin furniture was piled in lots; the carpets torn up, the pictures placed in corners; bronzes, marble statuettes, pretty and useless things which had been scattered here and there on étagères, on side-tables and brackets; all these things, which had been familiar to the members of the household, and dear to them, as a part of their lives, were now handled by rough men. The same rough men invaded poor Mrs. Temple's room, that room which for so long a time had been a sort of sanctuary to her daughters; the bed was undone, her favourite books and all the pretty trifles she had so valued,—partly because of their prettiness, partly because of him who had given them to her,—were arranged on the table. This was very hard to bear, and again it was Martha

on whom the burden fell. Lil was very weak and pale; the doctor would not allow her to leave her lounge, and the room where she lay was kept sacred from the men, whom she heard tramping heavily up and down stairs.

There were other steps besides those of the men, who were there simply to do their duty; steps lighter and more furtive. Friends, on one pretext or another, came to look at the lots; dear friends who had more than once admired certain objects, and who meant to bid for them,—should they go cheap. It was all dreadfully sad, of course; but then why should they not profit by the occasion which presented itself, as well as strangers? At sales, things sometimes went for a mere song, and what feminine nature, however tender, can resist a good bargain? So that, if

fewer cards and notes were left now than during the first days, the house was not at any rate without its visitors.

When the more important objects had all been arranged, ready for the auction, Martha began the inventory of her particular belongings, and those of her sister. One day, she said rather abruptly,—

“Lil, where is your jewel-box?”

Lil started; she knew vaguely that they were ruined, and that everything must be sold; but she had not thought that the “everything” included her trinkets. She, like her mother, was very fond of pretty things.

“In the bureau drawer; must they go too?

“Certainly they must.”

Lil did not dare remonstrate; but when the casket was brought to her, she opened it

unwillingly, and held each pretty trifle long in her hand. She sighed as she looked at Martha, who was quietly making out the list. There was not a ring, not so much as a slight gold chain with its modest cross, that had not its dear memories clinging to it. They were all presents: some from schoolmates to whom she had vowed eternal friendship and fidelity, and whose names she now scarcely remembered; from her mother; from "poor papa," especially. This bracelet she had worn at her first ball; she remembered it all so well! it was three years ago, she was still a school-girl, and ought not to have gone at all, but her father had taken her. She remembered her violent heart-beats, her anticipations of "something" which was to happen, and did not; she remembered, too, her surprise the next day



at finding that she was still just what she had been before, with only a headache added, and a little half-acknowledged sense of disappointment. The bracelet went with the rest, for Martha was inflexible. But when the turn of her pretty locket with the turquoises and diamonds came—her last gift, she held it firmly in both hands.

“Not this, Martha, I must just keep this one locket!”

Martha looked up from her writing, and a hard look came into her eyes, as she recognized the trinket.

“How long is it since papa killed himself, and since poor mother died?”

“Oh, Martha!”

“And you can cry over the loss of a trinket.”

“It’s so short a time since poor dear

papa gave it to me—it is as a souvenir that I want it."

"It is impossible, dear," said her sister more gently; "the jeweller consents to take it back, as he thinks he can dispose of it. It was never paid for."

Lil said no more; she guessed a good deal from the tone in which the last words were uttered, but she cried silently, fearing to ask for farther information. She had been her father's pet, spoiled and humoured by him; she wanted always to think of him as the handsome, gay, and prosperous man, who seemed incapable of growing old; she shrank from judging him, as she felt that Martha judged him, and could only feel a tender pity for his dreadful end. It was in silence, that having kissed the locket, she put it with her other trinkets. Martha did not even look up from her work.

CHAPTER V.

THE RICHARDS FAMILY.

Mrs. RICHARDS was a woman who, when she said a thing, meant it. If, in her determination to help the Temple girls, there lurked something besides pure charity ; if it gave her a malicious pleasure to prove once more, that it is the poor who feel most for the poor, who shall blame her ? She called several times without being admitted ; Martha felt during those early days, that a word of pity would break down that firmness of which she stood in such need. But at last Mrs. Richards refused to be sent

away, and Martha wearily consented to see her.

“ My dear girl,” said the lady, who did not believe in useless and wordy preparation. “ I have come to take you and Lil home with me. The sale is to-morrow, you cannot of course remain here, and besides, you must have some little rest, before you look round for work.”

At first Martha resisted, but Mrs. Richards with her plain common sense, showed her, that to go at once to some boarding-house, and become the objects of vulgar curiosity, would be dreadful. “ As to your fine friends, my dear, do not count on them ; unhappiness jars on their fine nerves, and tears tarnish the gilding of their existence ; there is no gilding in my existence, therefore I can offer you a welcome and a shelter, for a week or two ; it’s not

much, certainly, but it's better than nothing. I was fond of your mother, and I like you, so I dare say there is not much merit in what I do ;" she said all this very heartily, and Martha took her hand gratefully as she accepted the proffered kindness.

The sale took place ; fine ladies, undaunted by the crush, by the noise, by the vulgar bustle always attending such auctions, made splendid bargains, of which they were as proud as though the main object of a rich woman's life had been to get things cheap.

During this time, the sisters were fortunately safely sheltered in Mrs. Richards' "spare room." The going away from the house had been very painful, especially to Lil, who was still very weak. She lay, pale and motionless, in the strange bed, looking vacantly around the barely-furnished room,

which had that appearance of cold, stiff propriety which distinguishes apartments rarely used; she was unable to think much, but was oppressed with a blank feeling of utter misery. She felt that Mrs. Richards secretly despised her for her want of strength, physical and mental, but she had not energy enough to care much, even for that.

Meanwhile, Martha summoned up courage enough to begin, as Mrs. Richards expressed it, to "look about her." From the proceeds of the sale of house, furniture, and other valuables, there remained, when all the creditors were paid, a small sum. Mrs. Richards, in her own name, had bought some of the plainer furniture; that paid for, there still remained about a hundred dollars, to start with.

"Now, dear Mrs. Richards," said Martha, as she sat near her hostess, and helped

her with her stocking-darning, "how had I best set about looking for work?"

"What sort of work do you mean to look for?"

"That for which I am best fitted."

"Which is—"

"Teaching, I suppose."

"Teaching, naturally. It is genteel; all girls in your station of life, who have to work, think of that first, as a matter of course. A cook has to learn her business, so has a dressmaker, so has a factory-girl; whereas the art of teaching, which is certainly more difficult than cooking or sewing, is supposed to come by instinct."

"If I am not fitted for that, I am, perhaps, still less fitted to be cook or dressmaker, or even factory-girl. Yet, somehow or other, Lil and I must earn our own bread."

“Of course you must, and if you had been brought up, as I would have all girls brought up, to learn some profession, or trade,—something by which money could be earned, just as boys are brought up, nothing would be simpler. If, instead of your convent education (why you were sent to a convent has always been a mystery to me!), you had gone through the Normal School in Boston, for instance, teaching would be your right.”

“But I have not been through the Normal School, and, nevertheless, I think I could teach as well as most of the Lake-ville school-mistresses or governesses.”

“Perhaps you could, my dear, which, by the way, is no very high compliment to pay you. It seems you speak French with a tolerable accent, and generally put your participles correctly when you write it,—

that will tell in your favour with some of our fine ladies, more than sound English grammar. Lil plays prettily enough on the piano, and has a pleasing voice; these useless accomplishments will be paid her, I suppose, at a higher rate than mathematics, of which I am sure she is profoundly ignorant."

Mrs. Richards was not very encouraging, but, in spite of this, Martha, who was not apt to let herself be guided by the ideas or prejudices of others, steadily began her search for pupils.

Still the younger sister, though she was able to get up, remained principally in her own room; when she saw Martha come home each day from her weary round of visits to rich acquaintances, looking fagged and disheartened, Lil would make real efforts to shake off her lethargy.

“Martha, to-morrow I will go out with you.”

“My poor Lil, you have scarcely strength to go downstairs to dinner, and sit out Mr. Richards’ complaints, and his wife’s sharp sayings; how could you then stand the pity of old friends, pity which is half vulgar curiosity, and half contempt for poverty. You see we were all very well, as acquaintances; they invited us to their balls, but they do not want us as teachers for their children. “They are so sorry, is there nothing else they could do?” No, Lil, get strong, that is all I want of you for the present; and when you are quite well, you shall have work enough, be sure of that.”

Lil felt that all this was true, but she longed greatly to be of some use to her over-taxed sister.

The other inmates of the house were less

patient with the young girl than Martha proved ; they looked on her pale face as a proof of moral weakness, and in that family weakness of any kind was held to be worse than crime.

One afternoon there came a knock at the door, and before Lil could say "Come in," Issy Richards entered.

"Mother said I was to rouse you up a bit."

Lil started nervously ; she had been crying, but she hastily wiped her eyes, and tried to look very brave.

"Why on earth do you stay in this dreary old room, when it's so jolly warm down in the parlour ?" continued Issy, looking round with decided disfavour on the maternal spare room ; and in very truth it was not inviting. The white and blue cottage furniture looked shiveringly

cold this winter weather; there was no fireplace, and the heat of the furnace was mostly spent on the lower rooms, so that only occasional puffs of ill-smelling hot air came from the register. Near this register Lil sat disconsolately, wrapped in a shawl.

“Will you not sit down?” she said, without replying to the girl’s question, and trying not to look as though the “rousing up” were some inevitable surgical operation, which it needed much courage and nerve to bear.

“Thank you; I don’t like those stiff chairs;” and she seated herself on the edge of the table. She was an odd-looking little figure, as she sat on her perch, with her feet swinging to and fro. Her hair was naturally so rough, that it made a curly halo about her funny little face. She was more like some old wise child, or malicious

sprite, than like a modern sixteen-year-old maiden.

She remained silent for some moments, looking alternately at her own feet, and at Lil, who certainly, on her part, did nothing to further the conversation.

“How old are you?” she said presently, with that abruptness which characterized her usual mode of address.

“Nineteen,” answered Lil meekly, wondering whether her age would tell against her in the judgment of her visitor.

“Three years older than I. I mean to do more with the next three years, than you have done with the three just past.”

“Very likely,” answered Lil despondingly; “I have never done much good in my life.”

“Of course you have not,” comfortably asserted Issy, rather mollified by her vic-

tim's humility. "It is not exactly your fault, I suppose. You started in life as a fine lady; and I will tell you what such a woman's life means. As a girl, to look as pretty as circumstances will permit; pay visits, and dance, and flirt; then marry, have children generally; pay visits again, and gossip instead of flirting; grow each year less nice to look at; expand into fulness, or shrivel to skin and bones, according to the nature, then—die. No one has been the better for such a life—no one is worse off, when it is over. I mean to make something more of my womanhood than that. Now there's you, for instance; you do not see it, I suppose, but in reality you ought to be grateful that something more is expected of you now, than was expected a month ago; work may make something of you yet. I am not quite sure that it will,

but it may ; you are not too old, after all, to take a new start."

" Thank you," said Lil, smiling in spite of herself.

" Oh ! I am not quite sure, because, you see, you have begun all wrong. Moping takes all life and energy out of a body, and you do nothing but mope. I suppose it is dreadful to lose one's father and mother, and one's fortune at the same time ; but your sister has lost them as well as you ; and you let her do all the nasty work, all the seeking for help from people who find it much more convenient to shut their eyes to the unhappiness about them, than to try and alleviate it. She plans and worries all alone."

" I have been ill," Lil ventured to say, while the tears came to her eyes.

" I know ; and what is more, you were

not sorry to be ill. Sickness gives one a good excuse for all sorts of things—for keeping away from us for instance. Father's long stories bore you, especially when he tries to be witty and imitate mother. His witticisms are a failure ; I know it as well as you do. Then you are afraid of mother, and you cannot bear me. Jessie you rather take to, because she is gentle and sickly. I dare say you know, that we are not a very charming family, but at any rate we are the only people who offered to take you in."

"I am not ungrateful, Issy!" exclaimed Lil indignantly. "What a dreadful child you are!"

"Am I not?" answered Issy cheerfully. "I have been told that often. I have come to the conclusion that it is only 'dreadful children' who have any backbone, and who, later, make men and women of some ac-

count in the world. Shall I tell you what I mean to make of myself?"

"Do." Lil gave a little sigh of relief; the delight of talking about herself, she thought, might divert her tormentor's attention from her own shortcomings.

"I mean to be a painter. You know that, if I am a 'dreadful child,' I am at any rate the result of mother's theories. As soon as I showed talent for drawing—and I have real talent—she told me it was to be my profession. If I could not become a real artist, at least I was to find some way of earning money by my pencil. I earn some now—not much, but there is a beginning to all things. I paint box-covers, valentines, everything that the shopkeepers ask me to do. Not long ago I made a flower-piece, a real little picture; it was not very good, but it had a certain look

about it, and I sold it for ten dollars. I shall not keep to flowers, however ; I mean to go in for high art."

"Indeed," said Lil, feeling that she was expected to answer. There was something very comical in the appearance of this votary of high art, as she sat on the table, hugging herself and swinging her feet. The votary herself, however, had no idea that there was anything ridiculous about her ; she was so in earnest, that she even forgot to draw the parallel between her own aspirations and Lil's uselessness.

"I shall go to Paris or Rome, as soon as I have scraped enough money together. I suppose that will not be till I am much older, but the time will come, sooner or later."

"You would leave your family ? go off alone ?"

"Oh, yes ! why not ? I should not be

much missed. I am a living theory to mother—not much besides; she is inconsistent, like all the rest of the world; for there is Jessie, who is delicate, and affectionate, and feminine, and all the rest of it; who never will earn a cent for herself; who will fall in love, be sure of it, and marry, and be dependent all her life. Well! mother cares more for Jessie's little finger than for my entire person. Father's a little afraid of me—I suppose because I am so like mother. Oh, no! I should not be missed much. They will all be proud of my success; for I mean to have success. They will talk of Issy who has a studio, Issy who exhibited a picture, Issy who gets good prices for what she does,—and that's all."

"How can you say such horrible things!"

“Because it is the truth. People are usually afraid of the truth ; they cover it up decently, go round about it, shut their eyes ; but that’s not my way. I look things in the face, without shrinking.”

“But do you never long for a little real affection ?”

Issy remained silent a moment, and stopped the swinging of her feet.

“I should like to say ‘No,’ but it would not be absolutely true. Sometimes I want to cry, because of the want of affection of those nearest to me ; but as I should despise myself if I yielded, I swallow my tears. The truth is that I do not often think about it—as seldom as possible ; when the fit comes on me, I work and work, until I wear myself out ; that always cures me.”

“But what about the future ?” Lil ven-

tured to say ; for she was as romantic as most girls of her age. " Do you never fancy that the life you propose to yourself will be very cold and hard ? "

" You mean by that," answered Issy composedly, " that when I arrive at the age when girls usually marry, I too shall want a husband ? Not I ! I read lots of novels, I like to read them, they seem to fill a part of my nature which needs to be filled ; but as to putting any romance into my life—no, no ! I shall cut my hair short, and dress quite out of the fashion. Be sure that, were I a very treasure of sensibility, of gentleness, of devotion, of intelligence, short hair and an ugly dress would suffice to keep the whole male sex at a respectful distance."

Issy did not often secure so good a listener. She talked on and on with her

reckless frankness, but with her scrupulous truthfulness as well. It did Lil good. When at length her witch-like visitor was called away, she remained for some time lost in thought; the "rousing" was producing its effect. At last she got up, put on her black hat, with its long crape veil; she shivered under the sombre, dismal folds; she forced herself to look steadily in the glass; then quietly she went downstairs and left the house. She was still very weak, and walked with difficulty; everything about her appeared changed since she had walked along these very streets, so short a time before, gay and prettily dressed. Now, through her veil, the town had a sad and solemn look, as though it also were in mourning; and the people who passed by, laughing and talking, seemed to her as irreverent as un-

lievers laughing in holy places. More than once she was tempted to go back ; but she had taken her resolution, and she persisted. That evening, at the tea-table, she said quietly,—

“Mrs. Carnes has engaged me to go every afternoon to teach her children their school-lessons, and to begin the piano to the two youngest. I remembered hearing her complain that she had no time to overlook her children herself, so as I offered to do it for very little, she said that I might try.”

Every one looked up surprised, and there was triumph in Martha’s eyes, very pleasant to see.

“That’s right, my dear !” said Mrs. Richards heartily ; “the sooner you begin, the better.”

“That’s my doing,” whispered Issy to her mother with great complacency.

CHAPTER VI.

SOME FLOWERS.

GRIEF, in the midst of luxury,—expending itself in a warm, well-curtained, darkened room, where sympathizing friends come on tip-toe, and speak in softened voices,—differs essentially from grief, which has to look some of the sternest of life's facts in the face. Blow after blow had fallen on the sisters, one of which alone would have sufficed to make life seem blank and dreary ; yet they had to think and act in the midst of it all, keeping their wits about them, and only indulging occasionally in the abandon-

ment to their sorrow. After the first step had been taken, Lil kept bravely at her sister's side, taking her share of the worries and annoyances of their new position. She won thereby the somewhat grudging approbation of Mrs. Richards, and the patronizing regard of Issy, who looked upon the sudden change in their young guest as her own especial work.

People were not wanting, who found it extraordinary that the two girls, so short a time after their misfortunes, should be able to go quietly about their affairs; discuss practical questions with calm faces, and even listen to commonplace attempts at consolation, with only an occasional half-stifled sob.

“I guess they have not much feeling,” would say Mrs. Brown, the stout matron, who at Mrs. Richards’ sewing-circle had

volunteered to have her children taught at reduced prices by the beginners. "When I lost my poor father, I let no one see me for well-nigh a month, and even then I always had my handkerchief up to my eyes. As to that Martha Temple, a little more, and she would actually have laughed the other day, when I tried to explain to her my ideas on education! There was a twinkle in her eyes, my word on it! and I am sure there was nothing to laugh at in what I said. But some people have not much heart; the Temples don't even seem to understand the disgrace of the thing—for suicide does leave a stain on the memory!" added the lady, drawing herself up with the consciousness of using very fine language. "They do not even seem grateful to us for not making them feel that."

Others besides Mrs. Brown looked with

disfavour on the conduct of Martha and Lil. Of course it was known in a general way, that they would have to work for their living, and certainly, if instead of seeking that work, they had yielded to their natural grief, the criticism would not have been less universal or less severe. But to these fine people, who belonged to a world in which the wheels of life are so well oiled, that they go on smoothly without a shock to the most sensitive nerves, there seemed a sort of indecency in the fact that the sisters should be met in the streets, and seen to ring at many doors. Those, whose days melt easily and quickly one into another, do not reflect that grief lengthens out time greatly; that sleepless nights and harrassed days are very long to pass.

There still were cards and messages left; a few friendly visits paid also; but each

day these grew rarer. It could not be otherwise ; at the time, the catastrophe had been so terrible that public interest was arrested ; the papers had discussed it with the frankness which characterizes those publications ; fashionable ministers had improved the occasion, by preaching on the unstableness of human happiness ; and in every house it had been discussed. But soon other subjects of startling interest had arisen ; a fire eating up half a city ; a divorce case of palpitating interest ; a disputed election in short, life went on, and with it the world. It has always been so, and so it will always be.

To Lil this was a hard lesson to learn. She had been all her short life so guarded, so petted, so surrounded, that she at first would not believe that those who had made much of her when she was rich and happy,



could forsake or forget her now when she most needed consolation. One day she received the following note from Mrs. Cox :—

“ MY DEAR LIL,

“ I so want to see you, my pet ! but I dare not ; I am so soft-hearted that I should cry, which would be an odd way of cheering you ; besides, I must tell you that the suffering of those I love always affects me so exquisitely, that I am forced—by order of my doctor—to avoid exposing myself to any such emotion. I leave to-morrow for New York, and Washington ; I suppose I shall be very gay there, as my friends always make such a fuss with me, but believe, dear girl, that I shall often think of you. . . . All black must be sadly unbecoming to you ! . . . I am told that you

will be quite poor ; I wanted to help you, but your sister would not hear of it ; she is, I suppose, too proud to accept anything, but if you, my love, want a new dress or anything of the sort, let me know, for I wish you always to look upon me

“ As your very affectionate friend,

“ ANN COX.

“ P.S. Leigh Ward is going East also before long.”

When she had read this note, Lil sat very still for some time. Mrs. Cox’s postscript was doing its work, as probably she had intended it should. She started at last, hearing a knock at the door ; Mrs. Richards’ one servant came in, a broad grin on her good-natured Irish face, and in her hands the most exquisite basket of flowers that Lil had ever seen.



“ Them’s for you, miss.”

“ For me? who sent them? ” and the colour rushed to her pale face.

“ I can’t tell, miss ; I guess it must be some beau or other. It was a boy from the place brought ‘em, and he said as how the gentleman had left no card.”

“ Very well,” said Lil, taking her flowers, and trying not to let the girl see that she was trembling with pleasure.

He had not forgotten her, after all ; she had judged him too hastily ; in their short interview he had been embarrassed—nothing more ; if, since then, he had kept away, it had been out of delicacy ; he had left the task of reassuring her to these beautiful flowers. Doubtless he had arranged them himself ; he had such exquisite taste. He was by nature an artist, a poet, he, who loved music so

fervently, had with the sweet harmony of colours, composed a symphony of beauty, all for her.

Usually, after the evening meal, the seven o'clock tea, or "supper" as it was called in the family, Lil would slip upstairs to her room, on the plea of fatigue—a plea her pale face and languid movements fully justified; but this evening she followed the others into the sitting-room. This sitting-room was certainly not luxurious; to Lil it seemed very bare and ugly; yet there was a certain feeling of comfort about the place, it was large and well-warmed, the horsehair-covered furniture was ugly enough certainly, but it had been so worn, so played upon by children, that it had lost all the stiff, slippery look which usually distinguishes that kind of furniture; there was a sort of jolly



shabbiness about it, and about the carpet, too. As with Mrs. Richards herself, there was no shame-faced poverty in the look of the room ; it cheerfully made the best of things. Mrs. Richards had a feeling of comfortable superiority over her rich neighbours, as being more thoroughly republican and American, because of her hard life. When she turned a dress, or made her own puddings, she was buoyed up by a cheerful sense of virtue ; she felt like certain mothers of a dozen children, that she deserved well of her country. But she did more than sew or bake ; she was an indefatigable reader, she laid all her friends under contribution for books which she was too poor to buy ; everything was welcome ; translations of German philosophy, or of French socialistic works ; novels, poems, treatises on political

economy—nothing came amiss to her : she had, to an eminent degree, the national thirst for knowledge ; what she thus read with wonderful rapidity, could not all be perfectly digested certainly, but there remained enough of all this matter in her mind, to enable her to dash headlong into any discussion, however abstract. There are many Mrs. Richards's in America ; they form an element which, better trained, with a more thorough discipline in youth, a little less of intellectual pride, and a little more of charity, would do as much good to their country, as the frivolous lovers of luxury, the women who make of fashion and dress the idols of their lives, are doing harm to it. Something of all this, excepting the last reflection however, passed through Lil's mind as she watched her hostess ; the good reso-

lution which had induced her to spend the evening with the family, did not extend to the joining in the family talk; she sat at the table, pretending to look over the books and papers which covered it; little Jessie Richards, a fair delicate child stood at her side, but so that Lil stroked her soft hair she did not require either to entertain or be entertained. Issy only spoke occasionally, in disjointed sentences; she was busy arranging her drawings for the inspection of Mr. Bruce, who had promised to look over them that evening. As to Mr. Richards, he was blandly sleeping on the sofa, while his energetic spouse discoursed volubly with Martha. Lil was much engrossed in her own thoughts, but she nevertheless caught part of that conversation.

“I used to think that working for one’s

living was a very simple thing indeed ; that it only required energy, perseverance, and hearty good-will, whereas—”

“ Whereas my dear, these qualities alone are entirely insufficient,” retorted Mrs. Richards, cheerfully conscious that Martha was beginning to be really discouraged. “ You must understand that you are not the only women who have need of genteel work,—for that kind, the supply is always far greater than the demand. Intelligent young women in want of money swarm ; and it is those who have most assurance, who know best how to put a bold face on things, who succeed ; and by no means those who are most worthy and most conscientious. You have too much conscience by half.”

“ I own that the idea of having a regular school, even a small school,

frightens me. I could easily, I know, teach certain things—give French lessons, for instance—but pretend to teach everything, that is a very different matter! Suppose a pupil were to ask me a question, and that I should be unable to answer?"

"Answer all the same, boldly, calmly; neither the child nor its parents, most likely, would find out your ignorance, whereas if you hesitate—you are lost! As to the sort of governessing you speak of, that is out of the question. What we ask for in this country is school—a good place to send one's children, so as to have some hours of quiet. Children, as long as they are in the house, are a constant worry; schools were invented for the relief of mothers, far more than for the education of children; it is from that

point of view that you must look at the matter."

"But there will be the rent, and the various expenses of such an establishment."

"My dear Martha, I have found you the very thing you need; you and Lil are shocked at my idea, but you will end by adopting it."

The "very thing" which Mrs. Richards had found, was as eccentric as the finder herself. This was it: a great, unfinished, five-story building; that dreariest of things a new ruin, with gaping frameless windows, and bare unplastered beams; a speculation left unfinished for want of funds. On the ground-floor of this desolate place were two large rooms which the speculator had intended for his private offices, and which were about habitable

the flooring laid and the walls whitewashed. Until some adventurous spirit could be found to finish the building, these two rooms could be hired at a reasonable price ; the warehouse was situated in a fashionable avenue which business had threatened to invade, but business had soon thought better of the matter, and the adventurous spirit was not likely to be found immediately. Lil, though she did not often interfere, had expressed her utter disapproval of the plan ; it was odd, it was ridiculous, and she dreaded ridicule above all things. How would it be possible for Leigh Ward for instance, ever to call at such a place ? Martha herself was not quite in favour of it, and went everywhere trying to find something better ; what she did find was so exorbitant in price that she shrank back frightened, and regretted

more and more that governessing should not be possible.

In the midst of the discussion—which grew so animated that Issy was actually tempted to leave her drawings, so as to give her sage opinion with that frankness peculiar to Americans of her sex and age—the door opened, and John Bruce entered; Issy immediately left her mother's side and took possession of the young man, as though he had been her especial property. She was less sharp, less dogmatic with him than with any one else; she recognized his superiority as artist, and also perhaps she felt the influence of his nature, at once strong and gentle, simple, yet with a certain unconscious dignity, which earnest work and a high purpose always bestow.

This was the first time John Bruce had seen Lil since the ball; he had been quite

often to the house of late, having apparently taken Mrs. Richards' reproaches to heart, but Lil had never before been present. He freed himself from Issy's importunities, and went up to where the young girl sat apart; he wanted to tell her of all his pity, but he could not, he only wrung her hand, looking at her with his eyes full of earnest sympathy.

“Thank you, Mr. Bruce,” said Lil; she felt very grateful to him; indeed, she was in a mood that evening to be easily touched.

“This is what I wanted to show you, Mr. Bruce!” exclaimed Issy, in her sharp, shrill voice; he went to her, and they were soon both deeply engrossed. Issy was an apt pupil, she was never destined to make a great artist, for the sympathy with what is beautiful and elevated was

wanting in her ; but she had a power of imitation which was remarkable ; without knowing it, she already belonged to that realistic school of art which has in our days so exaggerated a number of admirers.

“ Oh ! if I could only go to Paris with you ! ” she exclaimed, with such eager enthusiasm that it was impossible even to smile at the oddness of the proposition.

“ I am afraid your mother might object to such a plan.”

“ Object ? why should she ? Oh ! because I am a girl and you are a man. What nonsense ! I would dress like a boy, and no one would ever know the difference ; I would be your pupil, or if you did not want to be bothered with me, I could enter the studio where you were, and work with the other students. What keeps me back is not at all that I am a girl, but that I have

no money for the journey ; and to think that there are rich women who spend thousands and thousands of dollars on dress and such rubbish ! ”

“ You do not know exactly what a painter’s atelier in Paris is like,” said John quietly ; “ if you were my sister you should never enter one.”

“ Because you, as a man, are bound to have narrow prejudices ; you do not know me, I am afraid of nothing ; besides, I should be so absolutely absorbed in my work, that I should hear, see, notice nothing beyond that.” John looked at her a little curiously ; there was no doubting her entire sincerity ; she was quite capable, he thought, of doing as she said. Presently she added, “ When do you leave ? ”

“ Next week, that is if all can be ready in time—you know I do not go alone.”

“Indeed,” said Lil, looking up suddenly with a half-smile. “Are you going to take a wife with you?”

John blushed slightly, and then there was something of displeasure, almost of reproach in his eyes, as he looked at her; she was interested, as all women instinctively are, at the idea of love and marriage, and he seemed by no means grateful for that interest.

“No, Miss Temple, I am not going to be married, yet awhile at least; my sister is going over with me.”

“Not yet awhile, or ever, I hope,” Issy exclaimed, “I should never forgive you if you married; what have you, an artist, to do with matrimony?”

“I hope to have something to do with it some day; artists more perhaps than other men need affection and sympathy.”

He said this rather shortly, and immediately resumed his criticism of the drawings.

“Oh! what shall I do when you are gone?” sighed Issy.

“What you must do, is to sketch a great deal, all the time, sketch rather than attempt finished drawings; whenever you see any object, animate or inanimate, which strikes your fancy, jot it down; try and do this with as few strokes as possible, catch the attitude, the movement of a figure, for instance—pray Miss Temple, keep that position a minute or two,” and putting his own theory in practice, he rapidly sketched the young girl, whose pensive attitude had struck him as peculiarly graceful.

“Yes, I see,” said Issy, eagerly following each stroke, “how like it is, though there is but a bit of the cheek to be seen; give it

to me, Mr. Bruce, it will serve me as model."

"No; you need no such model," and he put the scrap of paper in his pocket-book. "Now, see what you can do; while I talk to Miss Temple, you sketch both of us."

But once seated by Lil, he seemed quite unable to enter with any animation into the announced conversation; he played with a paper-knife, and only found short, commonplace phrases.

"Time must hang heavily on your hands, Miss Temple," he said, when he had discussed the weather.

"Yes; even when I am busy,—for I am busy. I have begun to work for my living; I used to hear a great deal about the delight of independence, the pride of earning one's bread, but I find no delight or pride in it at all. I ought to feel my nature elevated

I suppose, when I have spent an hour in trying to teach her notes to a child of five, or hearing French verbs from one of ten, but I do not.

“All will come easier to you before long,” said John, who wanted sadly to be eloquent, and who felt deeply humiliated at his continued failure. “When I come back from Paris, I shall find you successful, and very proud of your success. I shall think of you, and of your sister, very often.”

“There! I have finished my drawing,” exclaimed Issy. “Look, mother! does it not look sentimental? just as though they were a pair of lovers.”

“Exactly,” said Mrs. Richards drily.

CHAPTER VII.

WORK.

MARThA had hoped to begin her little school with about twenty pupils; that number had been half-promised to her; this had not been accomplished without much difficulty, without many humiliating refusals or hesitations; but finally, thanks to Mrs. Richards' energetic help, and to her own tact and good sense, her prospects seemed tolerably fair. On the strength of these prospects, since it was quite evident that nothing better could be found, the “very thing” discovered by Mrs. Richards

was hired ; small desks, chairs, maps, and other indispensable articles bought with the remaining dollars, and the day for the opening of the school fixed.

But at the last moment, several of the parents retracted ; it was such a queer sort of school for their children to go to ; it was not damp, it was larger and more airy than many of the other private schools, but then it certainly was queer. Besides there was another thing which told greatly against the Temple girls, they were Papists ; as long as they had been rich, this eccentricity was forgiven them, barely forgiven it is true,—as the eccentricities of the rich are forgiven by the world.

Mrs. Temple had belonged to one of the old Baltimore Catholic families, but as often happens, when the parents are of different religions, the children had at first

been left to grow up with no well-defined faith; at the convent, however, where they had been sent for their education, things changed at once, and their Catholicity grew firm and distinct.

It was as "queer" to be Papists, as to open a school in an unfinished warehouse; well-bred people disapproved of the one as much as of the other; besides, the low religion had made alarming progress of late, and prudent clergymen advised mothers of families not to place their children under such dangerous influences. In a few days, the twenty pupils dwindled down to twelve; it required all Martha's energy and determination not to be entirely discouraged. Mrs. Richards, who was a staunch Presbyterian, did not fail to improve the occasion by making her understand that her religion was the great cause of her failure, and

that her failure was after all quite deserved.

But if Mrs. Richards lost no opportunity of preaching the superiority of Protestantism, she continued to prove herself as helpful and as good a friend as ever.

When the time came for the sisters to take possession of their new abode, she, her daughter Issy, and John—who had grown to be quite one of the family—all went cheerfully to work to put things to rights. John proved to have a perfect genius for hanging up maps, driving in nails, and making doors move easily on their hinges. His talents did not stop here: in the other room, which was to serve both as sitting and bed-room, he contrived to take away all air of stiffness; he draped the curtains, disposed the furniture to the best possible advantage, and decorated the

bare walls with a number of sketches and studies, which he had had nicely framed.

“I am going away; it would be very kind of you to keep them till my return,” he said, in his off-hand way.

It was a day of bustle, of hard work, and of great cheerfulness to most of these busy people; a sort of picnic lunch was eaten in the schoolroom; several small desks placed side by side formed a tolerable table. But when everything was in order, and Mrs. Richards had gone away with Issy, John Bruce lingered yet a little; he was to leave the next day, and certainly he had many things still to do—things which he had neglected, so as to help the sisters—yet he lingered.

“How shall I hear about you, and about the success of your undertaking?” he

said, as at last he took leave. "Mrs. Richards has promised to write to me."

"And we will send you messages in every letter, be sure of that, John," said Martha heartily; she called him John, for she had known him when he was quite a boy, when Lil was yet at school.

"Thanks." He would have liked to ask to be written to directly, but that he had not the courage to do. "Good-bye!—do not forget me quite."

"Good-bye! Mr. Bruce; we are very grateful to you for your kindness; and we understand your delicate attentions better perhaps than you think," said Lil gently; she felt very kindly towards this young man, who had not abandoned them in their misfortunes—as others had done.

When he had gone, Lil looked disconsolately about her; it was already dark, and

as no gas-pipes had been laid on in the unfinished building, the improvised school-room was lighted by a couple of candles. It looked dreary enough ; the corners of the big room were in complete darkness, and the rows of new black desks appeared funereal in the extreme. Lil had always disapproved of the place, and she looked forward to their life in this odd refuge with great misgivings.

“ Why should not new ruins be haunted as well as old ruins ? ” she said, as she listened to the ominous sound of the wind careering among the rafters of the windowless upper stories.

“ Ghosts are far too aristocratic to think of taking possession of such a place,” answered Martha, laughing.

“ I know I shall die of fright,” continued Lil shivering.

“Well, before that sad event takes place, do come and help me with these books,” said the elder sister, who sensibly concluded that all Lil needed to chase away her nervous fears, was a little occupation.

As to herself, it was with positive relish that she prepared to begin life in earnest. Like many another intelligent, active-minded young woman, Martha had often felt the need of some serious interest, some real work; her girlhood, spent in luxury, in pleasures which had scarcely been pleasures to her, had always seemed to her very empty; when her mother had fallen ill, she had devoted herself to her entirely, refusing absolutely ever to leave her side for any society duties, or pleasures. But even this had left many hours on her hands; she was fond of reading, but there had been no one to direct her studies, none

with whom she could discuss her half-formed ideas, the unsolved problems which arose in her mind. Now, everything had changed, her life's duty had taken a practical shape; she had to earn her bread, and help Lil to earn hers; she was thoroughly in earnest and if hard work, and an eager desire to do her best, could make of her little school a model school, these should not be wanting. She would have nothing to do with long lessons learned parrot-like; as far as she knew how, she would teach on the German system. She talked of her plans and hopes to her sister, eagerly, enthusiastically, until Lil, really interested, forgot all her fears of ghosts and burglars.

Unfortunately Martha made the mistake at starting, of treating her pupils, who were for the most part children of ten or

twelve, like reasonable beings, capable of following and understanding her explanations. It was she who was to do the work ; she put aside all grammars, all geographies ; she talked unceasingly, until her throat ached, she endeavoured to mix the agreeable with the useful, to fix an historical fact by an anecdote, a grammatical rule, by many and varied examples. She made no regular division of classes, gave no long and tedious lessons to learn by heart, so that the children's former notions of the meaning of school, were entirely overturned. A few, bright and quick, as American children often are, took readily to this new method of learning, and by their questions interested Martha greatly. But these were the exceptions, and not unnaturally Martha, almost unconsciously, gave them all her attention, greatly neglect-

ing the others : these, finding they were not closely watched, spent their time in throwing paper balls at each other.

Among these last were Mrs. Brown's two daughters. The first day their mother questioned them about their new school, asked to see their books and the lessons they were to learn for the next morning. When she heard that there were none to be learned, and that Miss Temple had spent all the class-time talking about all sorts of things to Mary and Kate Irving, Mrs. Brown's indignation knew no bounds ; she felt that she was being cheated ; that even the reduced price which she had consented to pay was not being honestly earned. In a round of visits she made, the new school formed the principal subject of her talk. Thus, from the very beginning, Martha, in spite of her earnest desire to do her best,

because of that desire indeed, had taken the first step towards failure. "Miss Temple has theories," was repeated from one to another, the accusation was a vague one, but not the less terrible for that; people who have no particular ideas of their own, do not pardon others for having brains otherwise constituted.

Lil's share of work in the school was insignificant; indeed Martha really did not need her help at all. Her conscience was at rest however, for every afternoon she went to her own unruly little pupils, and did her best to keep them in order, and even to win their affections. But each day this life of drudgery grew harder to bear; she had not Martha's energy and natural love of work to keep her up; to her, drudgery was drudgery, and nothing else. She loved what was beautiful, and

their schoolroom was hideous ; she craved the happiness which had for so many years seemed to be her rightful portion, and her present life was very dreary ; she wondered at her sister's cheerfulness. Comparing her own listlessness to it, she judged herself even more harshly than others judged her—and that was not saying little. At least, she imposed silence to her repinings, she did her best, poor child ! to interest herself in the school, in the German method ; to answer Martha's eager talk ; to smile, even when her eyes were full of tears ; but she did all this with such apparent effort, that it was more painful to witness, than if she had frankly given way to her feelings.

John Bruce had not deserted them, he had held out a friendly hand to them ; why was he the only one to have done

this? This thought would intrude itself on her, over and over again; she turned from it, and it pursued her; she despised herself for not conquering it, but her contempt helped but to make her more unhappy.

Had Mr. Ward left the city? She did not know. No one ever mentioned him; the few visitors who found them out in their poor refuge were, for the most part, not his friends; those who did know him never even mentioned his name.

Did those people fancy she was in love with Leigh Ward? and did they pity her because she was abandoned? Her pride revolted at this, and made her seem cold and stiff, so that the visits were not repeated. Even the thought of the beautiful flowers could not now console her.

One afternoon towards the latter part of February, Lil was returning from her daily

work, more tired and dispirited even than usual. There had been a sudden thaw; the snow which had fallen heavily a few days before, was now in that stage of melting which makes walking a most disagreeable operation. Lil usually chose out-of-the-way streets, so as to avoid meetings which were always distressing to her; but on this particular day she went along a fashionable avenue where the walking was a little less atrocious than elsewhere; it was not a day, she thought, which fine people would choose for either walking or driving. She trudged along as best she could, a parcel of books and music under her arm, an umbrella in her hand, and a waterproof cloak covering her dress in that ungraceful way proper to waterproofs.

Suddenly she stopped quite still; as she lifted her eyes, which till then she had kept

fixed on the dirty ground, she saw Leigh Ward on horseback, talking to some ladies in a carriage. It was the sound of his laugh which had caused her to look up; at that moment their eyes met; the young man changed colour, looked embarrassed, then lifted his hat, and quickly bent down to resume his conversation. Lil did not return his salute; her principal feeling was anger with herself for having stopped, and in that way having attracted his attention. Then, after the first moment, there came a great bitterness; what was there in common between her, the poor little daily governess, ill-dressed, mud-stained, and that fine gentleman on his well-groomed horse? She now belonged to a world which was not his; she said to herself that henceforth she would take her place honestly and frankly in that world; among the

workers, whose chief aim in life is to earn their daily bread. She entered the school-room with a firm step, and head proudly erect; but Martha had gone out, and it is difficult to keep up the heroic mood very long when one is quite alone; besides, Lil, in spite of her resolutions had an aching longing to cry. This she did not allow herself to do, but she went to her room, took off her hated waterproof, and then sat down in front of her toilet-mirror. She looked at herself long and attentively; at last she said half-aloud,—

“Mrs. Cox was right, all black is horribly unbecoming to me! ”

CHAPTER VIII.

A LITERARY VENTURE.

“LESS zeal, my dear!” Mrs. Richards would say to Martha, as it became more and more evident that success shunned the humble schoolroom. “You are wearing yourself out for nothing, worse than nothing. Remember that as a rule, what people like best is mediocrity; a good honest plodding mediocrity. They do not like to eat their porridge too hot. If Mrs. Brown and her friends read poetry—which they never do,—they would prefer Southeby to Shakespeare; if they could tell one picture from

another—which of course they cannot—they would go into ecstasies over Carlo Dolci and turn their backs on Michael Angelo."

"But, dear Mrs. Richards," answered Martha, laughing; "I find no likeness whatever between myself, and my method of teaching, and either Shakspeare or Michael Angelo. I am simply an honest girl, trying honestly to do her best."

"Precisely! the thing is, not to do your best, because your best is too good for those who employ you. After all, your purpose is to earn your livelihood, not to reform the world. Study the weaknesses of those whom you need, and play on them. You look shocked at my plain speaking; when I was your age, I also started in life with the idea of doing my best, of putting my shoulder to the wheel; the only result I obtained was, that my shoulder was

bruised and the wheel never stirred an inch; so now I let things pass. I rebel sometimes, but more often I laugh. That is what you must do. Try a little honest mediocrity, and you will see its good effects at once."

But Martha was not willing to try it; she not only worked hard in class-hours, but when the children had left, she read and studied, doing her best to fill up the deficiencies in her own education, of which she was sensitively conscious. All this earnestness and good-will could not but bear some fruit; the more intelligent among her pupils made rapid progress, and these would battle for their teacher with all the enthusiasm of that age; they grew very fond of her, and their parents naturally also took up her cause warmly; so before long, the little school, like many

another more important assembly, was divided into two camps—the Conformists and the Nonconformists: the disputes between these two camps were sometimes so warm, that Martha had great difficulty in maintaining anything like discipline. This life was wearing her out, and besides, she was too clear-sighted not to see that all her efforts would not suffice to insure ultimate success; the malcontents were in decided majority.

On one occasion Susie Brown, the oldest and most unruly of the children, asked her the date of the battle of Agincourt. Martha had a bad memory for dates, and confessed that she had forgotten this one; promising, however, to read up all the details of the battle for her next day's class.

“Some people had better go to school again themselves, before attempting to

teach others," was the comment of Mrs. Brown.

Miss Temple's real inefficiency from that day became an undoubted fact, and people shook their heads, saying that it was very well to try and help needy young women; but that really the education of children was too serious a thing to be trifled with, and that charity began at home.

"That is all the attention you paid to my preaching on that very subject!" exclaimed Mrs. Richards, who heard the rumours, and immediately hurried off to see Martha. "Why, if Susie Brown had asked me who was king of the moon at the present moment, I should have answered Lunatic the XXIX. without a moment's hesitation!"

Martha would willingly have kept all her anxieties, her fears for the future, to

herself, but there had come a change in Lil. All her listlessness was gone; a fever of work had come in its place. There was not much for her to do in the schoolroom, so she turned her new activity to reforms which had, in very truth, grown urgent; she forced Martha to explain to her the exact state of their finances, an investigation which proved to be far from reassuring. The sisters looked at each other rather blankly, for quarter-day was coming fast on them, and there was not money enough to pay the rent. They must retrench, they must live more poorly still. It was Lil who took the initiative in this. Martha had for a long time past felt the necessity of extreme economy, but habits of extravagance are not conquered in a day, nor in three months either, and besides, she had shrunk from imposing privations on her



sister—privations which she herself would have borne with cheerful philosophy ; she was therefore as much pleased as surprised at Lil's attitude. They had till then had a woman a few hours a-day to clean the rooms and cook their dinner. Lil insisted that this work, light enough certainly, was to be her department ; she took to sweeping, dusting, and cooking with stern resolution. Martha smiled at the clouds of dust she raised, and at the mutton-chops she burnt in her attempts at cooking.

“ My poor Lil ! ” she would say, “ when we used to play duetts together, you always would begin the crescendo three measures before it was marked ; you never could understand that a composer should ever wish for a moderato — do try the moderato now, you will find that it will answer.”



If Martha understood what was the secret motive of her sister's excess of zeal, she never alluded to it, she made light of her repeated culinary mishaps, and only laughed at her eccentric notions of economy; it took the young housekeeper no little time to discover that new green peas were luxuries, and that bought pastry was not the least expensive of desserts. When she at last made that important discovery, she reduced the daily meals to the simplest possible form, alternating mutton-chops and beefsteaks with mathematical precision, and adding to these delicacies a few potatoes—nothing more. Her economy grew to be a virtue of the Roman type; sometimes Martha had laughingly to plead for a portion just a trifle larger. But these reforms did not satisfy Lil's new energy. She felt that it was Martha

who really bore the heaviness of the burden on her own shoulders, and that was not just. She thought over all her accomplishments, wondering which of them could be turned to some practical account.

Suddenly an inspiration came to her ! at school, she had manifested a certain taste for writing ; indeed, she had always been looked upon, by her companions, as something of a genius. She had a facility which enabled her to do a little of everything ; she could versify with alarming ease, and turned to prose with equal readiness. She once began a poem in blank-verse, which, however, never got much beyond the invocation to the muses ; this great and solemn work was broken in upon by the composition of a farce innocently facetious, which was acted with great success in the school-hall. Since leaving the convent, it is true, she had never thought of pursuing her

literary career, but now the time had come to utilize her talent. Her dreams of ambition did not take too high a flight, what she sought was not so much fame as profit ; she had heard of women who earned a very comfortable living by writing ; she had read their effusions, and had judged them to be, what indeed they really were, rather inferior productions. She had no very exalted idea of her own ability, but—thought she—at least I can write as well as they ; so, full of courage, she resolved to try.

But in order to write, one must have something to write about. For some days Lil hunted after an idea.

For a magazine she could write neither an imitation of "Paradise Lost," nor a farce ; at last she determined to write a legend—a legend of the Rhine. It is true that she had never seen the Rhine, and that her life

had not been such as to develope in her any vivid notion of what constituted the weird or mysterious. But one cannot always choose one's subject; an inspiration rejected does not always engender another inspiration, and after all, if she had never been in Germany, she had at least read a book on German folk-lore. Besides, the subject tempted her; like most young writers afflicted with facility, images crowded her prose, and hyperboles cantered between the lines. Her teacher, who believed in an ornate and florid style, as being most calculated to give brilliancy to school-compositions, had encouraged this propensity, and surely a highly-coloured style must suit a subject like the proposed legend of the Rhine? Mrs. Richards, if she had been consulted, would have advised the young writer to choose instead the baldest subject

she could find in real life, to strip it of all the romance (which in real life will intrude itself even in the baldest incidents), treat it in a style nearly allied to that of a ledger, put in it as many figures as possible, and then send it to the editor of a first-class magazine ; such a story might have some chance of being accepted. As to imagination, it was out of fashion ; no one wanted it. But Lil did not consult Mrs. Richards ; she was shy of her new project, she did not speak of it even to Martha, until the story was nearly finished. Martha, indeed, suspected something of the kind from the unusual quantity of foolscap-paper which disappeared, but she said nothing. When at last, Lil, a little nervously, confessed her authorship, she was all enthusiasm, and listened with great interest to the reading of the story. Martha herself had never

been brilliant as a writer, and honestly admired her sister's talent ; she heartily congratulated her, as Lil dropped her voice mysteriously at the close of the last paragraph, which paragraph was indeed a very remarkable climax of choice horrors. Then the two sisters fell to talking comfortably over Lil's golden dreams.

“ You really think it is not too bad ? ”

“ Bad indeed ! I should like to see Miss Tompkins who writes for the ‘ Oceanic ’ do half as well ! ”

“ Oh ! ” said Lil, with an immense sigh of satisfaction ; “ and Miss Tompkins, they say, makes quite a good income, with her stories and novels. Perhaps I shall write novels too some day ; it is not difficult to be an author, I assure you, Martha. You just have to get an idea, and then let your pen run on. The important thing, they say, is

to get a good publisher; I shall be very careful in my choice of one. I have heard that some of the greatest firms behave very shabbily to authors, especially to beginners."

"I suppose one does not earn much at first," said Martha, feeling that it would not do to let Lil count too much on immediate success.

"I suppose not," replied Lil; "to begin with, I shall accept anything, of course; but when I get well started, we will leave this horrid place, and have nothing more to do with Mrs. Brown; we will hire a nice little house, with a large room in it: there you can have a class of French, nothing but French, for big girls who just want practice; you can have them in the evening too, once a-week, say, for conversation. A sort of party, you know, with

tea and cake, it would be sure to be popular, especially if you allow a little dancing to end up with. That, and my writing would make us quite rich ; in time we should build a house for ourselves, and—”

There is no telling how far Lil’s ambitious ideas would have carried her, had not Martha broken in upon her golden dreams with a hearty laugh.

“Have you forgotten,” she said, as soon as she could speak, “a certain fable, called “Perrette et le pot au lait”?

But Lil was not to be laughed out of her pleasant dream ; she clung to it, she felt that in it there was a refuge from other day-dreams which she was trying her best to banish.

She worked hard, correcting, pruning, adding to her little story, until she looked upon it, not as a work of genius, for Lil

was a sensible girl, but certainly as not inferior to the mass of stories published every month in the magazines—in which she was not far wrong. At last, mysteriously, with a beating heart, looking nervously about her, for fear of being surprised in the act, she dropped her manuscript, duly addressed and stamped, in the letter-box of the big post-office. She stood still an instant, wondering that the neat bundle which contained so many of her hopes and fears, should slip in as easily as though it had been a mere business letter.

“I suppose I ought not to expect an answer for two weeks—perhaps, indeed, for three.”

“I suppose not,” answered Martha, looking at her sister’s face, with the compassion of superior experience.

Once started, Lil was too truly American, too spirited, to rest. She immediately began another story, intending to bestow it on another first-class publication. She never dreamed of course of writing for any but first-class publications. This time she left the regions of weirdness and mystery, to enter those of history and grand dramatic passions. She chose an episode of the French Revolution, in which, as it may not be difficult to imagine, a daughter of the people loves and saves a youth of the very highest nobility. She knew, it is true, as little of France as she did of Germany; her notion of the revolution was taken from the mildest of histories, which solved the vexed and perplexed questions of that period by the simplest of means, that is, by the placing of all virtues, graces, and nobility of sentiment on the side of the victims; and

all manner of horrible wickedness and evil intentions, on the side of the conquerors.

One afternoon, Lil was alone in the schoolroom; it was a half-holiday, and Martha had gone out. The young authoress was greatly excited over her writing; she was in the midst of the volcanic loves of Octave and Marie, and she had so thoroughly identified herself with her heroine that she was, at that moment, as far away from Lakeville as though in reality she had been transported to the time and place about which she was writing. She was suddenly brought back to real life, by a knock at the door; she hesitated an instant, then with a little shrug of the shoulder, learned probably from her French heroine, she resumed her work. If the intruder had come on some important errand, the knock would be repeated; if

not, why then she could go on scribbling with a light conscience. The knock was repeated ; this time Lil called out, “Come in,” with no very inviting inflection of the voice, and at the same time she hastily stowed away her manuscript in her desk.

“ Better late than never ! ” exclaimed a high young voice, as the door was flung wide open. The intruder was a young lady rejoicing in the poetic Christian name of Lydia, and the unpoetical family name of Briggs. She was showily dressed in a light spring suit; her beauty—for she was considered a beauty—was also of a showy kind : there was nothing subdued about her, either in manner or voice ; there was even something aggressive in the sharp click of her high heels. She was just Lil’s age, and they had known each other since childhood, without ever becoming friends.

Miss Lydia was queen of one set, while Lil had been the centre of another ; there had always been rivalry and mistrust between the two. On Lil's part, the rivalry had never taken an active form ; but it was not so with Miss Lydia, for hers was a combative nature. When Mr. Ward had for the first time made his appearance in Lakeville society, creating therein a great stir, she had marked him out for herself ; but he was a man of tastes too refined to care much for the somewhat vulgar charms of the belle ; he disapproved of the pearl-powder she used with great lavishness, he disapproved of her flashy taste in dress, of her familiarity with young men, of her metallic voice most of all ; he found in her a type he had met too often "doing Europe," and he resented the impression produced by such girls on Europeans, who,

taking them as specimens, judged the rest of the nation accordingly.

Miss Briggs never forgave Lil for having, without effort, obtained what she, in spite of very open flirting, had failed to win. She, like many others, had watched Mr. Ward closely after the "Temple disaster," and she had not been able to hide the satisfaction she felt at his evident desertion.

Lil rose to meet her unexpected and unwelcome visitor; instinctively she nerved herself for a conflict, and resolved not to give the enemy the satisfaction of seeing the slightest sign of emotion or vexation.

"What an odd place!" exclaimed Miss Briggs, with that frankness of which she boasted as of a virtue.

"Do you think so?" inquired Lil with grave surprise, looking about her as

though the idea had never presented itself to her mind. "But then, as I presume you do not intend to come to school to us—"

"Supposing I did mean something of the sort?" Miss Lydia laughed as though she had proved herself to be very witty; she was in the best spirits, too much so to take offence at what might have seemed an allusion to her known contempt for what she called "book-learning."

"I do not quite understand," said Lil, still quite grave.

The young lady explained that she was to spend the following winter in Washington, where she expected to be very much in the diplomatic circle. It had happened that once, she had found herself in the society of several foreigners, and that she had innocently shown the most entire



ignorance of the history and literature of their respective countries.

“ You see, I never had time to do much reading ; then, between ourselves, reading is a bore—even novels. But after all, one must not appear ignorant when such things are talked about. What I want you to do is, to look over the boxes of books I have just had sent me from New York, and to tell me in a few words what they are about ; what I must admire, and what I must pretend not to have read, for propriety’s sake, you know. Then you must tell me about the authors, teach me their names and something about them ; make that a real lesson—you understand ? ” Then, as Lil, who could not help smiling at the proposition, hesitated, she added, “ Of course I should pay you well.”

“ Thanks,” answered Lil coldly ; “ I am

not at all the person you need. Besides, among those books which you have ordered by wholesale, there are probably many which it would be very unpleasant for me to read."

"Oh ! as to that, teachers are bound to know lots of things which girls in society are supposed never to have heard about."

Lil had promised herself to be very calm, and she succeeded. After all, the impertinence of a Lydia Briggs mattered but little. The young lady herself appeared quite unconscious that her frankness might be displeasing ; she continued chattering with perfect cheerfulness.

"If you will not, why, there's an end of it. I am sorry ; I should have liked to have done something for you. Then it would have been nice to see you regularly ; we might have talked over old times com-

fortably. Why do you not ask me about people? Are you not interested in knowing who is engaged, or who has flirted, and who is married, among the girls?

“I am as little interested in my old acquaintances, as they in me.”

“I expected something of this sort. They say that people who have reverses of fortune are always cross and bitter. After all, you know, one has no time to run after those who are no longer of one’s set. I, for instance, have wanted a hundred times to come and see you, but—”

“So as to describe our ‘odd place’ to your friends? Thank you.”

“If you usually receive people like this, it is no wonder they do not return. Fortunately, I am the best-natured girl in the world! I meant to have a good chat with you, and I mean to have it still. By the

way, what a dreadful flirt your old admirer Leigh Ward is!"

"Indeed!" retorted Lil, looking so composed that her friend was actually provoked.

"That he is! He left town two days ago; did he come and say good-bye? He was to have gone earlier, but he found Lakeville very attractive. Between ourselves, though he certainly is very handsome and fascinating, no sensible girl would ever trust her happiness to him! They say—you have heard the report, I am sure—that—that he proposed to me, and was refused. I am not quite sure that there is not some truth in the report."

"I am," said Lil quickly. The two girls looked at each other, and it was Lydia who lowered her eyes first. She was very angry, and immediately after



took her leave. When she had gone, Lil tried to resume her writing, but the loves of Octave and Marie, which had so interested her an hour before, now seemed tame and unreal. The next day, however, she went to work, with even more energy than before.

The two weeks passed; then the third slowly wore itself away, and there was no answer from the famous New York editor.

“Very likely he could not read it immediately,” said Lil, trying to look cheerful; but she no longer spoke of building a house with the products of her pen. She finished her French story, however, and it was so full of thrilling incidents that Lil felt not a little proud of her work; and confident that this at least would receive prompt and respectful attention from the editor of the Boston periodical for which it was destined.

This also she dropped mysteriously, and with a beating heart, in the letter-box, but her eyes were a little less bright than the first time, and her step, as she turned away, a little less proudly elastic.

The weeks passed by; no answer came from New York; none either from Boston. Lil's hopes sank lower and lower. She had not the heart to begin a third story, but watched the postman with anxious eyes. At last, one day, there was something for her; it was a yellow businesslike letter, with the name of the well-known Boston publishing house printed on the envelope.

"Oh, Martha!" said Lil, trembling, "you open it; I cannot."

Martha took the letter and read it aloud. It was a refusal of the stereotyped kind. The editor politely said that, notwithstanding the decided merit of Miss Temple's

story, it was of a nature which would not suit their purpose. They would have the honour of forwarding the manuscript to the author if she desired it.

Lil did not cry, but she held fast to Martha's hand, feeling very desolate indeed. There was not much brightness in the prospects of the two sisters at that time, and they clung to each other, finding their one comfort in their strong undemonstrative love for each other.

"I am so glad no one knows of it but you, Martha," said poor Lil; "I shall never try again."

CHAPTER IX.

FAILURE.

THE time wore on slowly and painfully after this. At first, there had been a kind of excitement in the novelty of the situation, but now there was nothing to relieve the dull routine of each day. With the inexperience of those to whom all things had been easy, Martha and Lil had looked upon earning their bread as an operation which merely needed a little good-will and energy. Neither of these qualities had been wanting, yet it grew more and more evident that Mrs. Richards was right, and that these alone were not sufficient. When



quarter-day came, the sisters paid half of what they owed, and were obliged to ask for time in order to pay the rest. This was a dreadful mortification, but there was no alternative. It was no longer like "playing at being poor"—it was stern reality. Lil learned what it was to examine her half-worn boots with tender anxiety, and to trudge through all sorts of weather, rather than spend a few cents for horse-car fare. Each day these things were harder to bear. She hated poverty; she hated the bare ugliness of it, and rebelled secretly against her fate. She tried not to let Martha see that she rebelled, but her pale face and dispirited air spoke for her. Poor Lil was no heroine; she had found courage and energy enough to make real efforts, but she could not find resolution enough to continue, when she found that those efforts had

met with nothing but failure. During this time she was often bitter ; it seemed as though her life were too hard to be endured. Active suffering would have found her brave enough, but the dulness of poverty, the sameness of each day's worries and humiliations irritated her, and took all the freshness of youth from her face.

In this way summer came, and with it the long holidays. It was with a sigh of relief that the sisters sat down in the schoolroom, when the door had closed on the pupils—a sigh of relief, even though they did not know what was to become of them. The little school, in spite of the staunch championship of the best scholars, was a failure ; these were but three or four in number, and to think of struggling on would have been sheer folly. And now, what was to be done ?

The problem was the same as it had been six months before, only there was this difference ;—a first venture had failed, and there was now less help to be expected from friends than ever. Their's was an old story ; they had ceased to be the interest of the moment. Other catastrophes had caused their misfortunes to be partly forgotten ; but their need was as great as it had been—greater indeed, for they were in debt. By dint of extreme economy, the first quarter had, by small instalments, been paid ; but a second was now due, and the small sum which was laid aside, and which was necessary for the daily wants, could not suffice to pay it. Besides this, Mrs. Richards, who had been so staunch a friend, was absent. Jessie had been ill, and her mother had taken her into the country. Martha and

Lil had therefore but themselves to look to. They had but few relatives in the world, and these were almost unknown to the sisters ; besides, their refusal to accept the protection of the Boston aunt had given the impression to the other members of the family that they were independent-minded young women, quite able to take care of themselves. We all know that such a conviction is very soothing to the consciences of those who otherwise might feel bound to do something for their poor relations. Independence of character is a highly-esteemed virtue, and it would be a shame not to give that virtue every opportunity of exercising itself.

“ Let us leave Lakeville, and go—no matter where,” Lil would say now and then ; but even while she said it, she knew that this could not be. If they had not

succeeded in a place where, after all, they had received some help and encouragement, what would become of them in some strange city, where no one knew them? But the mortification of remaining in a town where she had been rich and prosperous, of meeting people whom she had formerly known as equals, was becoming each day more insupportable to the young girl. She wanted to go away, to hide herself in a place where she would not so much mind being shabbily dressed, wearing boots that had been mended, and soiled gloves. All these things were petty annoyances, things she should not have minded; but she did mind them. After all, life is made up of small things.

Martha did her best to rouse her sister, to instil some of her own brave spirit into her.

“It is not because we have failed once, that we should fail a second time,” she said, as they sat by the open window, one soft summer evening.

“We have even less chance of success than ever,” said Lil despondingly.

“Not at all; for we shall begin this time as we ought to have begun at first—by putting our gentility in our pockets.”

Lil winced; she did not want to put her gentility in her pocket.

“You foolish child! you fancy that because you do what you think ladylike work, you have not gone down in the social scale. If you think it over a little, you will understand that the hand which gives money, and the hand which receives it, never clasp in real equality. People still speak to us, do they not? But for my part, I do not feel much elated by such

condescension ; it does not feed me, nor clothe me ; neither does it, that I can see, give me any society advantages. By and by, perhaps, when the time of mourning is over, one or two stray invitations may find their way to us ; because, after all, teachers are 'received.' If by ill luck, tempted by the memory of former triumphs, you accepted such invitations, you would come back to me, you poor child, crushed and wounded ! You would have discovered that the pretended equality accorded to you was no equality at all. I, for my part, do not think such gentility is worth the price we should pay for it."

" What do you mean that we should do ? go out as servants ? I am afraid I should not get very high wages as cook," said Lil, smiling faintly at the remembrance of her numerous culinary mishaps.

“No, not that—as yet, at any rate. If only we had a little capital to start with, I should propose to open a small millinery establishment. I have an idea that my taste for bonnet-making—you know I always took my hats to pieces, so as to have the pleasure of doing them up again—would be of far greater use than all my French and other accomplishments. People pay far more, in proportion, to have the outside of the head decorated than the inside filled.”

“Keep a shop!” exclaimed Lil. It seemed to her very dreadful indeed. She wondered whether Martha did not guess the secret reason which made her dread any irretrievable going down of the social ladder. She herself would not always acknowledge this secret reason, but, in spite of her best efforts, it remained firmly fixed

in its hidden corner. Martha had never alluded to Leigh Ward since the dreadful night after the ball; according to her, he had disappeared from their lives as completely as the yellow satin chairs, the jewels, the fine dresses. Often Lil was grateful for this delicate reticence, but sometimes, on the contrary, it irritated her. How could Martha, who did not know what she was suffering, understand that adversity had a double meaning to her, which made her worthy of all pity? But Martha did understand this quite well; she had forgotten nothing, and if she maintained an unbroken silence on the subject, it was because she thought silence and patient waiting the only remedies for such ills.

This was a difficult time for both sisters; ordinary occupations were interrupted; the long warm days passed heavily by, and

each of these days brought their resources more inevitably near their end. It was the dead season, and work of any sort was almost impossible to be found. It was hard to be cheerful under such circumstances; there were long silences, for the two could not look at things from the same point of view. In spite of her best efforts, it was evident that Lil considered her sister's resolution to take work wherever she found it, as being among the greatest misfortunes which had fallen upon them.

At last Martha came home one day with a bright flush on her cheeks, and a look in her eyes which Lil understood perfectly. She shrank from questioning her sister, but yet her curiosity was strongly aroused; at last, unable to contain herself any longer, she said,—

“ Well, Martha, you had better tell me at once—is it general house-work, or are we to take in washing ? ”

“ Not quite so bad as that,” answered Martha, laughing. “ When I told you that my taste for millinery would serve me better than any of my accomplishments, I was not far wrong ; only my first idea was too ambitious : first ideas always are. Mrs. Taylor, our old milliner, has promised to take me on trial, as a sort of overseer in her work-room, and also as clerk ; she has a great deal of French correspondence which is embarrassing to her.” Lil turned a little pale. So the step had been taken ; their place for the future was to be among small tradespeople, lower still, in fact. But Martha did not, or would not see this ; she went on cheerfully, “ I am to begin to-morrow, without pay at first ; I have to go

through a sort of apprenticeship. I do not really enter until September; then she is to give me seven dollars a-week, and to raise the salary if I suit."

"And I? am I to sit with my hands folded? may I not wait on her customers, or sweep the shop? She might give me a dollar or two a-week for that! I don't think I am worth more."

"No, Lil," answered Martha, quite seriously, "the work I take on myself, is not work for you; you shall never be a shop-girl. In the first place, you are too pretty."

Lil opened her eyes wide.

"Pretty people have hands, feet, and brains like the others, I suppose! Besides, I am not pretty now—" and she looked at herself disconsolately in the small mirror.

"I have thought of something for you. You write a very good legible hand, and I

mean to ask Judge Sparks—he used to be a good friend of mine—to get you work as a copying clerk. It is nice quiet work, you would have a little room to yourself, and the pay, though not exorbitant, is sufficient to keep soul and body together—which is about all one can say of women's work, at the best.”

“Very well,” answered Lil; and then, in imagination she saw her sister and herself through a long vista of years, plodding wearily all day long, living silent, forgotten, unnoticed lives; earning just enough, not to starve; growing grey and faded and old; then dying, without leaving so much as a regret behind them—the story, as she said to herself, of many old maids before them.

The first day, Martha came back with a look of triumph in her bright, honest eyes.

“Think of it, Lil! Mrs. Taylor, to try

me, set me at once to copying a Paris bonnet, and the copy was such a success that the worthy lady had to make a real effort not to look too much pleased, for fear I should immediately strike for higher wages. It is true the inside was not as neat as it ought to have been, stitches showed where they should not, but there was an undeniable style about the thing ; and a lady who happened to come in looked at it with decided favour. I shall become a first-class milliner yet, depend upon it ! ”

Lil tried to look interested, but the effort was manifest—Martha noticed it.

“ What is it, Lil ? something has happened.”

“ I have received a letter.”

“ A letter ! ” exclaimed Martha with sudden alarm.

“From Mrs. Cox,” added Lil hastily, understanding the cause of her sister’s alarm, and blushing to find that she understood it. “She only reached town a day or two ago, and she immediately thought of me.”

Martha took the note, with its immense monogram, its faint perfume, and its scrawly, ugly handwriting. It ran thus:—

“MY PRETTY LILY,

“I have just come home, and I want to see you. I have met no girl, all this long time, who pleases me as much as you. You must not fancy that I forgot you, though I had no time to write. I have something very particular to talk to you about, something which I trust will give you pleasure. I shall be at home to-morrow after three, and shall expect to see you,

and to prove to you that I am now as ever,

“Your friend,

“ANNE COX.”

“I wish she still had no time to notice you,” said Martha.

“You are unjust; you never liked her.”

“No; I never did. You will say that it is because she always ignored me, as she ignores all that is not pretty or bright, or useful to her. But that is not the reason; I do not say that she is heartless, but she has such an adoration for her own dear self, she is so entirely deity and high-priest, all in one, that the rest of humanity is only to be prized in proportion to its usefulness to her. If you happened to be in her way, Lil, she would step over you, with the same sweet smile with which she now holds out her hand to you. What does she want with

you?" she added, with sudden and fierce jealousy.

"What can she want, except to prove to me that I misjudged her when I thought myself abandoned? Why not believe that she really was fond of me, and is so still?"

CHAPTER X.

MRS. COX.

SINCE the night of the ball, Lil had not even been in the vicinity of Mrs. Cox's house. Her occupations had all been on the other side of the river, and from fear of meeting her old associates she had always avoided going out at all, save when she was forced to do so. It was now with a beating heart that she swung back the gate, and walked along the gravelled drive towards the house. There was a pleasant lull and rest there, under the shade of the big trees, now in all their summer glory of deep green



foliage; a feeling of peace and repose, strange to be found in the midst of a busy, noisy city. This quiet soothed her nervous excitement, she tried to gather all her self-respect, and all possible composure; tried to forget that her mourning was rusty and worn, that she was going to step into a world that was no longer her world: she repeated over and over again to herself that it was Mrs. Cox who had sought her, and not she who had sought Mrs. Cox. Still she was not quite calm, as she rang the bell. A man-servant, in plain clothes, opened the door; men-servants were rarities in Lakeville, but Mrs. Cox, who chose to impose fashions and not to follow them, was served by footmen; she had attempted to put them in liveries, but that was so anti-republican, so un-American, that a perfect storm of indignation was roused;

Mrs. Cox found that there was a limit to what Lakeville would endure, even from her, and that liveries were beyond that limit ; she, being a wise woman, yielded.

When Lil entered the principal drawing-room, that very room where, not many months before she had stood, the queen of the evening, she saw Mrs. Cox seated quite at the other end ; she was surrounded by three ladies, dressed in the very extreme of fashion.

“ Come here, Lil, my darling,” she exclaimed as Lil stood, half-hesitating ; she had hoped to find Mrs. Cox alone. “ Come here ! ” she did not rise from her chair, but simply bent forward a little. The ladies with her understood from this immediately the social footing of the new comer, and stared at her accordingly.

“ This,” continued Mrs. Cox, drawing



Lil towards her, and kissing her affectionately; "is a great pet of mine. Sit down, dear!" and she pointed to a low chair not far from herself, but a little out of the immediate circle; then bestowing on her "pet" one of her very best smiles, she continued the conversation with her visitors, as though that conversation had received no interruption.

Lil felt put aside; and the glow of pleasure which had come over her at her warm reception, gradually faded away. The talk, to which half-absently she listened, was no longer the talk of her world. It was the usual jargon about balls and theatres, engagements and flirtations, the fashionable preacher of the day, and the last divorce case. It was talk in which she was not expected to join, in which, indeed, she could not have joined,

for society had gone on its way since she had ceased to belong to it, and it was already a strange world to her. Having nothing better to do, she examined the young girl of the party, who talked faster and louder than the others; her dress was of the last fashion, so fashionable indeed that sitting was a matter of singular difficulty, only to be accomplished by skilful side-way manœuvres.

“At last!” said Mrs. Cox, when the door closed on the three ladies; “I thought they would never go! and I so wanted to talk to you, darling!” She drew Lil to her, made her sit close to her, then took the young face between her hands and examined it critically.

“My poor child!” she exclaimed, while tears, real tears stood in her eyes; “how these cruel months have changed you!”

"I have suffered," said Lil, trying to speak calmly.

"Of course, of course! I might have guessed it. What a dreadful life I lead, my dear; I have no time, positively no time to think of what is not actually before my eyes. I did not forget you, of course; indeed, I cried over your misfortunes more than once, and meant to write to you, but how was it possible to find a moment? If you knew how I am run after, persecuted dear, absolutely persecuted! It is my money, of course; I am not blind, and I know quite well what makes me so irresistibly charming and beautiful. But whatever the cause may be, the effect is undoubted; so Lil, you must pity and not blame me—you did blame me, I saw it in your face as you came in—now confess it!"

"I felt myself deserted," said Lil, not feeling in her heart the pity which this victim of circumstances demanded of her.

"I knew it! and naturally your sister, who does not like me, improved the occasion to preach to you of the heartlessness of the rich, and to point out, that all virtues are on the side of the poor. But it is not true. What is true, is this: people, rich or poor, bear in mind those whom they meet, those who move in the same circle as they do, who have the same interests, the same vices, the same virtues; but life is so crowded, so feverish, that it is not to be expected that those who have every moment of their time taken up, every affection of which they are capable kept in constant play, should go out of their beaten track to find yet more occupation for their time, and for their affections!

You and your sister dropped out of our circle; fell, through circumstances for which no one was responsible, into another sphere, another world; people after a while became accustomed not to see you any more. At first they talked over your misfortunes, they felt for you, they really did! they took what means they had, to express their sympathy—”

“Yes!” interrupted Lil, “for the first three weeks, we had a great many cards left at our door. It was pasteboard consolation.”

“People do what they can, dear,” continued Mrs. Cox, patting Lil’s hand; she really was a little fond of this pretty girl; “some did more.”

“That is true, I never before had the opportunity of thanking you for your proposed generosity.”

“ Do not speak of that,” said Mrs. Cox, a little hastily ; “ considering your sister’s peculiar disposition, that was a blunder on my part ; I am always willing to acknowledge my mistakes. I wish to be more successful in my second attempt to help you.”

“ Thanks, dear Mrs. Cox, it is very kind of you ; but we really do not need help now. It is true our first venture, our little school, has proved a failure, but we could not expect to succeed at once. Martha will soon earn seven dollars a-week as milliner, and I—well, perhaps I may find some house-work to do ; I can make a bed now, and even cook a beef-steak. You might perhaps recommend me—” then suddenly the girl’s courage gave way ; the magnetism of the soft patting which still continued, the atmo-

sphere of luxury in that flower-scented room, intoxicated her ; she rebelled passionately against her dull, coarse fate ; her pleasure-loving nature called out loudly within her, and in spite of her best efforts, she burst into a paroxysm of sobs and tears.

Mrs. Cox soothed her, scolded her, laughed at her ; and at last Lil controlled herself.

“ I beg your pardon, Mrs. Cox, I ought to have remembered that the doctors forbade any rousing of your sensibilities. I will go, and believe me, I am not ungrateful to you for having remembered me. At the same time, as my sphere is destined to be so entirely separated from yours, I had best say good-bye—a real good-bye. I shall never forget that you were once a little fond of me.”

“ You shall not go: you are a little bitter now, but that is natural. I mean to keep you all the evening, for I have something to propose to you—something which need not offend your independence or even that of your sister; there is no question here of almsgiving, I shall pay for what I receive; no more. I mean to take you to Europe this autumn, as my companion.”

Lil grew suddenly quite pale; it was her way of showing great emotion. In an instant, she saw all the promises held in that little sentence; she would get away from the scene of her humiliations and struggles; there would be no more mortifying contrasts, no condescending nods from former acquaintances. A new world would be opened to her, a world which it had always been her dream—as

it is the dream of every American girl—to visit. But Martha she would not stop at that thought. She raised her eyes to her friend's, and said in a low trembling voice,—

“ You are very good to me.”

Mrs. Cox was satisfied with the effect she had produced. She was a woman who liked to procure for herself all manner of pleasant sensations, and playing fairy godmother to this pretty girl was decidedly pleasant.

When Lil had recovered from the first shock of her surprise, Mrs. Cox said,—

“ Now, my dear, let us talk the matter over quietly and sensibly. When I told you that you should be laid under no obligation to me, it was the truth; of course my first motive in what I propose is to be agreeable to you, I like you and I feel for

you ; I know that your life here is wretched, that your pride is being constantly wounded; I want to take you away from all this. You will have other things to bear, no doubt ; for poverty is hard under any circumstances—I ought to know it—but at least you will be beyond the reach of patronage from girls who in that way revenge themselves on you for your past belle-ship. Mind ! I do not blame those girls, they but follow their nature. What I want to say to you frankly is this : I by no means intend to take you travelling with me in the character of a young lady to whom I am expected to act as chaperon. When I offer to engage you as companion, I mean you to be really such, paid by me to perform certain clearly defined duties.”

“ I understand,” said Lil proudly. “ I would not have it otherwise.”

“ That is right. To explain what will be expected of you, I must say a few words about myself. You know if I have one virtue it is frankness ; I have always said fearlessly what I thought, and on the whole I do not believe it to be the worst policy. When I married Mr. Cox, I never pretended that it was for anything but the position and the wealth that marriage brought me. I hated poverty as you hate it, Lil ; it seemed to me then, as it seems to you now, the one irremediable, dreadful evil. Other women think this ; other women sell themselves as I did,—you see I am very plain-spoken—only they cover over their act with a plausible hypocrisy which deceives no one. But I can afford to ride roughshod over the petty deceits of ordinary women. Immense wealth gives immense power, but it also creates duties and responsibilities. In

the first place, it causes me to be the object of all fortune-hunters, from dukes downwards; it also excites the envy and malice of nearly every woman I meet. If by any chance I gave the slightest hold on me, scandal-mongers would destroy my reputation with real delight; I like liberty, I like adulation, I must have my court, I never mean to be without one if I can help it; to have all this, and yet to escape calumny, I must not travel alone. Last year, I had a sheep-dog in the shape of a good creature, a clergyman's widow, the quintessence of respectability; but she was ugly, and she had a disastrous predilection for brown, a colour I detest: I stood it as long as I could, but human patience has limits, and at last I sent her away."

"And you have thought of me as sheep-dog number two," said Lil, half-laughing;

“ I fear my bark is not formidable enough to keep the wolves away.”

“ You will answer the purpose very well ; I must be known to have a companion, that is all.”

“ And what would be my duties ? ” asked Lil very soberly.

“ You must be a sort of private secretary ; you write a pretty, clear hand ; you will have to answer, or to destroy scores of letters every day, principally begging-letters ; they must be classed ; you have intelligence enough to distinguish between those that are unimportant and those that are not ; every morning you will give me a brief statement of the correspondence. Then you must have an alms account-book, which I shall overlook every month. I put aside a certain sum every year for my charities ; I always spend it, and never

go beyond. A person in my position is bound to be charitable; I take great pleasure in giving, as long as I can do so without inconvenience to myself. Then it has its uses; I know a lady who, in Rome, got into the highest circles by sending a five-hundred *lire* bill to a Roman princess who was getting up a charity. You must be my almoner, you must examine the different cases and report to me. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly. What else?"

"I shall expect you to be always on hand when I want you; never in the way, when I wish to be alone; you have natural tact,—that is a quality which I recommend you to cultivate to the highest possible degree. You see," she added, smiling, "you see, my pet, what I offer you is no sinecure."

“No, it is not,” answered Lil candidly.

“Yet you will accept,” and again Mrs. Cox, looking down on the young girl, enveloped her, so to speak, in her smile: she was a fascinating woman when she chose, and at that moment she chose to be very fascinating.

“And Martha?” whispered Lil; she had till then resolutely kept the thought of her sister away.

“She is fond of you after her fashion, and it would be unpardonable selfishness in her to prevent your acceptance of my offer. What can she give you in exchange?”

Mrs. Cox said much more to the same purpose, kept Lil to dinner, and during the evening talked much and well about herself. Indeed she rarely had any other

theme of conversation ; she had so thought about herself, so studied her own nature, her weak points and her strong points, she so worshipped herself, respected herself, turned and adapted all things in life to her personal advancement or pleasure, that she had had no time to direct her intelligence elsewhere. The general interests of humanity at large left her cold ; the great problems of society did not interest her ; she did not care to read, unless in some novel she happened to find a case bearing some analogy to her own, and even then the heroine did not interest her long. She turned from the book to her eternal self-contemplation. She had never thought of blaming herself for any of her acts ; indeed, a delicate sense of right and wrong was absolutely wanting in her. She did not believe in love, in heroism, in self-sacrifice, simply because she knew

herself incapable of experiencing anything of the kind.

When Mrs. Cox at length allowed Lil to go, she felt a delightful glow of self-gratulation; at that moment she was really fond of the young girl, of whom she had not thought a dozen times in as many months, and the conviction that she had done for her what none of her other rich friends had done, gave her a comfortable satisfaction which was exceedingly agreeable.

Martha was waiting for her sister, feeling anxious and uneasy; she listened in silence to Lil's excited and rather incoherent account of what happened, then she said with a sharp ring in her voice,—

“ But you will refuse—you will surely not go with her ? ”

“ Oh ! Martha, I have promised.”

The elder sister said nothing; but she

who had been so brave through all her troubles, now utterly broke down. She was so fond of her young sister, so proud of her, so very loath to lose her. The tears came fast, and Lil, as she tried to console her, almost declared that she would retreat her promise to Mrs. Cox; yet in her heart she knew that she would not do this.

CHAPTER XI.

ALL THAT GLITTERS IS NOT GOLD.

EVEN had Lil seriously meditated yielding to her sister's wish, and allowed Mrs. Cox to start for Europe without her, circumstances would have rendered the putting her resolution into execution, very difficult. Mrs. Cox, who was not a woman to hide her light under a bushel, told her friends—and their name was legion, of her benevolent intention with regard to her pet, Lil Temple.

“Poor child! I positively cried when I saw her, she is so changed! it is hard to see a sweet pretty creature like that fade

away in the mustiness of a schoolroom ; she needs change of air and scene ; the trip to Paris will do her a world of good, and it will not be my fault, if she does not come back to America the wife of some rich man or other ! I am so fond of her."

" How good of you—how kind—how generous ! " was echoed on every side, and Lil Temple's good luck became the theme of gossip almost as much as her misfortunes had been, some months before.

Still under the influence of Martha's grief, Lil went to Mrs. Cox, half-determined to break the engagement she had made ; but at the first word, her friend laughed merrily,—

" My dear girl, do you think I know human nature so little as not to have expected this, and to have taken my measures accordingly ? Do you fancy that I

do not know just what passed between your sister and yourself? You are a very nice girl, Lil; but weak, decidedly weak; you yield to the influence of the moment; Martha and I, just now are conflicting powers; but as I have on my side many advantages, which fortunately you value as they deserve to be valued, I have not much to fear from my antagonist. Your berth is taken; I telegraphed to have it retained, as soon as you left me the other evening. A dressmaker is coming to-day to take your measure, for naturally I must renew your wardrobe. Sit down, and let us talk over that important question of dresses and bonnets."

This was a question which was not without interest. Lil therefore sat down, and after a few qualms of conscience, yielded to the wishes of her imperious benefactress.

Visitors came and interrupted the discussion; but Mrs. Cox kept her by her side, and to Lil, it almost seemed as if old times had come back again. She was spoken to, treated as though she had suddenly stepped once more into the magic circle called Society; several ladies vowed that they had imagined that Martha and she had left the city long since, otherwise, how delighted they would have been to see her often at their houses! Lil was not much deceived by these advances, still they were not unpleasant to her; Martha's dreadful resolution of becoming a milliner, was not yet universally known; and she, as Mrs. Cox's protégée, was almost a person of importance once more.

After this, Lil spent most of her time at the big house; she grew quickly at home among its luxuries; she seemed to expand like a flower in sunshine; no

one could accuse her of being faded now, her eyes were bright, and she was prettier than ever. Mrs. Cox took possession of her, she became her latest plaything, a plaything of which she was proud. Lil as yet was submissive to all her whims; the harmony between them would not have lasted long had it been otherwise. Once only Lil showed signs of rebellion; it was when she was told that she was to leave off her mourning.

“ My dear, I hate black almost as much as brown; I hate everything that is sad and ugly! I only want to look at pleasant objects, to think of pleasant things; black is a perpetual *memento mori*—and I want no such *memento*. Death has to come of course, we all know that; but in the meantime, the less we think of it, the better for

our health and spirits ; I want no skeleton at my feast ! ”

Lil pleaded, but pleaded in vain ; all she could obtain was to keep her black dress until they left Lakeville. She was beginning to feel the iron hand in the silk glove : a sudden terror came upon her ; she wondered whether the present freak of affection which had come so suddenly, would pass away as suddenly ; even now Mrs. Cox’s fancy for her looked fearfully like tyranny. But Lil was fascinated, even less by the luxury and elegance which surrounded this woman, than by the woman herself. She chose to dazzle Lil, and she succeeded ; during this time, while she was still merely a friend, not a paid attendant, her patroness was so charming, talked so freely, and with such delightful frankness, that the young girl would have needed to make a very

strong effort to break through the charm ; and that effort she did not even attempt to make.

Still, Mrs. Cox being a wise woman, did not forget the business part of the affair ; she fixed the salary Lil was to receive ; it was not a large one, for, as she quietly observed, she incurred many expenses which, with an ordinary companion, she would certainly not have done. First of all there was the wardrobe ; she did not forget what it cost her, even though she experienced much pleasure in superintending it. This was more of an art than may be supposed at first : she had decided that Lil should not be taken for a young lady on her travels, she ought, therefore, to be dressed according to the part she was to play ; everything was pretty and in perfect taste, but there was an air of retiring

deference in the soft, dark colours, and dependence reigned among the modest trimmings—the hats themselves were full of proud humility and reserve. Lil saw all this, and understood it perfectly.

“Young girls in Europe dress far more modestly than they do in America,” said Mrs. Cox one day; this was the only allusion she made to the simplicity of the pretty dresses.

Sometimes Lil asked herself what was the secret of this fine lady’s undoubted influence, which was, in spite of what all the Mrs. Richards’s in the world might say, quite distinct from the effect produced by her immense wealth. She was a clever woman certainly in many ways, but she was neither highly educated, nor irreproachably refined; she held books, pictures, music, as things which belong to

the world of the rich, just as silk hangings, Turkey carpets, and beautiful bronzes belong to it; she would speak about these, as she occasionally spoke of politics, just enough to show that she was not entirely ignorant of them. But with her, these were not favourite themes, she much preferred to talk about herself and her neighbours. Here she was perfectly at her ease; her clear, cold mind was well stored with observations of human nature; she saw the hidden motives of acts with marvellous quickness; fine words never deceived her, she believed in evil rather than in good; but with her, this cynicism was of the most genial kind; she was never angry with people for being selfish, or ungenerous, or ambitious; she calmly observed the working of these springs of action, and thought it all very natural;

she was by no means sure that in their place she would have acted otherwise. One day she was talking about her lovers—a favourite subject; she would sometimes laugh at herself, when she had indulged in this feminine weakness a little more than usual.

“After all, I have a real right to talk about it, for I suppose few women have had more offers than I; when I was your age, and I may say with truth, beautiful, my lovers were not numerous. It was not so much because I was poor—that after all in the United States is not an obstacle—but because my position was not a good one; I was not in what is called Society, and it was thanks to my cleverness that I married as I did. No! when I speak of lovers, I mean the men who for the last ten years have wanted to marry me. Men



of the highest rank: American politicians, French dukes, English lords; wherever I go I am pursued. It is very amusing, I assure you. For a long time I vowed I would never marry again; I had had enough of conjugal bliss, and I thoroughly enjoyed my liberty and my millions; but now I begin to hesitate."

"Are you in love?" asked Lil.

"In love?" and Mrs. Cox laughed her merriest laugh. "You silly child, is there such a thing as love? There is passion, there is the attraction of beauty, there are feelings which it is not necessary to examine too closely; but love, what poets and novelists call love—does it really exist? I think not, at any rate I never felt it; yet I believe there is not a more contented woman on the face of the earth than I am."

“I would not change places with you,” exclaimed Lil.

“Who knows? you will perhaps do as I have done, become what I have become. But to return to my suitors; you must not think that it is my money alone which attracts them,” continued Mrs. Cox more seriously; “at least they do not acknowledge to themselves that it is. Great wealth sheds about it a certain atmosphere of fascination which is made up of many and various elements; one does not see the dollar, but one enjoys the refinements and luxuries which the dollar gives. You, at this present moment, feel that fascination even while you fancy that you are above the worship of mere wealth; of all the natures I know, yours is perhaps the most accessible to such influences— influences half-poetical, half-sensuous. Well,

my suitors—some of whom have enough money of their own, not to run after other people's—feel that same influence, and yield to it with a facility which amuses me. Then there is the excitement which such competition gives; there are so many who want me, that the winner will feel a positive triumph at having distanced the others."

"And will there be a winner?" asked Lil curiously.

"Ah! that is the question. I shall probably make up my mind this coming winter. If I were a Livingstone or a Carrol, or other nice-sounding name, I should probably keep my dear liberty, but Mrs. Cox! —it is out of harmony with my wealth, with my face and my figure; I have what people call a queenlike presence: the name of Cox suggests ridiculous memories of a

certain celebrated farce. If ever I do marry, I shall have a name that rolls out superbly like golden coins from an over-full bag. It was really not fair of Mr. Cox to have such a name!" she said this laughingly, but Lil knew that she was more than half in earnest.

CHAPTER XII.

OUT IN THE BIG WORLD.

THE parting between the two sisters was a very painful one—all the more painful that neither could express all she felt. Martha, when she had seen that Lil was really going, had avoided all remonstrances, but she felt hurt and grieved nevertheless. On her side, Lil disapproved more and more of the step her sister had taken; when it became known that the elder Miss Temple had turned milliner, Lil felt that the society temperature about her had suddenly gone down many degrees. Democracy is all

very well in theory, but as to putting it into practice by remaining on terms of equality with one's milliner or dressmaker, why, that was another thing ! Yet, if Lil disapproved of what Martha had done, she did not allow others to disapprove of it in her presence, or to speak of her, save with great respect. On the eve of their departure, Mrs. Cox said carelessly,—

“ By the way, Lil, say good-bye to your sister for me.”

“ No, I will not,” answered Lil abruptly, while her eyes flashed.

“ And why not, pray ? ”

“ Because you are unjust to Martha; you always were so; even when we met on equal terms, you used barely to nod over your shoulder at her, or you slipped your gloved hand through her fingers, as if you would say, “ Dear me ! how extraordinary



that I should remember who you are!" simply because you felt that you could have no hold on her sensible, honest nature; you cannot endure equals or superiors, you must be always surrounded by impressionable foolish creatures like me, who worship or fear you, as the case may be. Now that she has chosen to earn her living as best she could without consulting society prejudices, you ignore her altogether,— why you should suddenly remember her existence, I cannot imagine. No, Mrs. Cox, I will not take your message to my sister!"

Mrs. Cox looked at her with intense enjoyment.

"My dear child, you are charming! There is nothing of the tame dependent about you, thank goodness!" and then laughing, she turned away.

It required all the delightful bustle and

excitement of the journey to bring back Lil's bright spirits; she had travelled but very little in her life, and everything she saw amused and interested her.

From the time Lil fairly entered upon her new life, there came a slight, a very slight change, in the relations between herself and her patroness. She was the companion, she had her duties, she was paid to perform them; she was an inferior. Mrs. Cox still talked to her—petted her even at times—but she rigidly exacted the services for which she gave out her dollars. There was another reason for this change. In Lakeville, during the late summer weeks, most of her friends were absent; her court was incomplete, and she had many unoccupied moments which it had not been unpleasant to spend in forming her new companion; she needed to be constantly amused,

and Lil had amused her. Once out of Lakeville, things had altered. They arrived at New York some time before the sailing of the vessel, which was to take them direct to Hâvre. Here, Mrs. Cox was immediately surrounded; she had friends everywhere—friends who had beautiful country-places on the Hudson—friends who had returned to town, and all visited her; all courted and admired her. She was extraordinarily popular—so popular, indeed, that her wealth alone could not have explained it satisfactorily. “She is so thoroughly good-natured, so ready to be pleased, so clever, her smile is so fascinating and so lavishly bestowed,”—all this, her friends repeated continually; and it was all quite true.

In the midst of the bustle and turmoil which this great popularity engendered, Lil was left a little on one side; sometimes she

accompanied Mrs. Cox, sometimes she was left alone at the hotel, with—as she would say to herself with some bitterness—the other servants; she began plainly to understand her position, and she proudly accepted it; she was paid for her services, and those services she would give to the best of her ability, asking for nothing but what was her due; she was intelligent and quick, proved to be an excellent secretary, and won occasional praise for her tact, neat handiness, and rapid comprehension. Mrs. Cox had perhaps expected a scene or two from her spirited companion, and was grateful to be spared such; she congratulated herself on the way she had moulded her young friend, and rewarded her by taking her to the theatre, or for very pleasant drives.

The weather was still beautiful when



they went on board the steamer. As she stood on deck, looking out on the beautiful bay with its sun-lit waves, the grand sweep of shore and the huge spire-tipped city looming in the distance, she felt like those children in the fairy tales who "go out in the big world to seek their fortunes." She was full of hope and courage; there was all the buoyancy of youth about her, no fear of the future dimmed the enjoyment of the present, the mere joy of living was upon her, and that seemed enough.

But the joy of living did not suffice during that time for Mrs. Cox; she was always dolefully sea-sick on the ocean, she never went on deck, was never seen at table during the ten or twelve days of the passage; it was not that she was really ill all that time, but it was a principle of hers never to allow herself to be seen at a dis-

advantage; she chose never to descend from her queenship, and sea-sickness even in its mildest form is not compatible with queenship. She needed much waiting upon, much amusing during the voyage; it is true that the hardest work fell on her maid. Lil was never allowed to enter the stateroom till the toilet was completed; that important act once accomplished, Thérèse was replaced by Lil. A little of the lightest possible literature was skimmed over, but usually Mrs. Cox would say, "Put down that stupid book, and talk to me. Tell me about the people on board."

No detail was too trivial; everything was acceptable which could bring forgetfulness of her sickness. Fortunately, Lil was quick at observing little details, and managed to make the gossip amusing enough. People crowded together in a small space



inevitably show their follies and foibles to each other. There was, of course, the belle, who received the attentions of half-a-dozen very young men ; there was, besides, a number of other girls, more or less pretty, more or less envious of the belle ; there were the heavy matrons, the lounging papas, lost without the excitement of the daily papers and the gold-room talk ; there were the children ; there was even the necessary prima-donna, going back to France after a triumphant tour in the “States.”

“ Mind, Lil, you may look on at the flirting as much as you like, but that is a pastime which is absolutely forbidden to you. In your position it would never do. To a rich girl, flirting does no harm ; it is a thing received. Whether in reality it is as harmless as we all say it is, I do not stop

to examine; but to a poor girl in a dependent position, it would be the greatest detriment. I warn you very candidly, that at the first sign of it in you, I should send you back to your sister without mercy. I must have perfect respectability, severe respectability, in those about me; my peculiar position requires it. I never permitted myself, either as a young girl or a young woman, to flirt, and I will not permit it in you."

"You need not fear," said Lil, rather coldly. "I should be obtuse indeed if I did not understand the duties of my position. Besides," she added, in another tone, "even if I wished to flirt, I should be much at a loss to carry out my desire. There are not many men on board, and they are all monopolized. I do not suppose they know that I am a little nobody, but one



must be of 'the set' to be a favourite with Americans. It does not suffice merely to be rich or good-looking, to become popular; one must be 'one of them.' As it is, no one knows me, and I remain in my corner quite undisturbed by masculine admiration. At table I sit next to an old gentleman with shaggy eyebrows, who grunts when he eats, and is not over-scrupulous about his dress. I am not sure that he has ever looked at me; the dishes interest him far more. On the other side I am well protected by a number of vacant chairs."

Notwithstanding the light way in which Lil said this, her isolation weighed on her; she found the cold stare of strangers hard to bear; she compared herself to the other girls who were surrounded and admired, and she knew that she was as pretty as

any of them. Once or twice, little advances were made to her, and those she felt obliged to repulse. Evidently these gay young people concluded that she was proud or morose, and the slight advances were not repeated. She was positively grateful to her bushy-browed neighbour when, on the fourth day, he honoured her with a stare, as—unexpected courtesy!—he handed her the pickles. There was something in his rough face which was not unpleasant, and she noticed that, when the others addressed him, it was with a certain deference. After the pickle incident, Lil was rather startled to find that she was being honoured with another stare; then he suddenly said,—

“Your ‘ma’ sick all this time?”

If Mrs. Cox could have heard him!

“She is still sick,” answered Lil, as soberly as she could; and then she added,



with a little effort, "But she is not my mother; I am travelling with her as companion."

"Oh, indeed!" and there came still another look from under the heavy eyebrows. It was, however, followed by no farther attempt at conversation. Lil felt that the people opposite who had heard her little speech, were looking at her curiously. She grew painfully embarrassed and ashamed of her embarrassment: for the first time she regretted being a good sailor.

CHAPTER XIII.

ON BOARD.

LIL's taciturn neighbour did not seem to think any the less of her on account of her dependent position, differing in that respect, considerably, from the belle, and the belle's mother who sat opposite. On the contrary, he, of the shaggy eyebrows, offered her, at the following meal, not only the pickles, but various other condiments; he performed these little services usually in silence, or accompanied them simply with a grunted monosyllable; evidently he was not a talkative man; the young lady opposite

being shut out from other masculine attentions by the position of her seat at table, had endeavoured to bring him into the conversation, and had failed signally.

Lil rather wondered at her persevering efforts, and at the evident ill-humour she felt at her want of success, for the object of her attacks was a man of decidedly shabby appearance. This shabbiness rather attracted Lil; she considered that his small attentions proceeded from that sympathy which the poor feel for the poor, and she was grateful to him for it. Once or twice as she sat on deck, her knitting lying idly on her lap, he sat down by her, not apparently from any desire of furthering their acquaintance, for his conversation was confined to short remarks on the weather, but rather because there happened to be a vacant seat near her, and because he seemed

to avoid with great care the gossiping, laughing, flirting groups scattered here and there.

Mrs. Cox was much amused at Lil's description of her one acquaintance, whose name she did not know, and graciously permitted her to encourage his attentions ; an old fellow, shabby and poor, was not compromising, and on board there are so few things to talk about !

One evening, the deck being almost deserted, Lil, instead of going down early to her cabin as she usually did, remained quietly walking up and down, enjoying the beauty of the night. She was in a peaceful, happy frame of mind ; she had always been very accessible to the influence of beauty in nature, and now that sorrow and trouble had begun to deepen her nature, she felt that influence more than ever. It



was a clear, still night; an immense calm had come over the usually restless ocean, the waves themselves had a sleepy rocking way of breaking about the ship's sides, and a glorious moonlight made visible the endless expanse of water; one had to look, however, with great attention, to distinguish the horizon, there where the infinity of waters touched the infinity of sky. There was a broad band of dazzling white light on the water, a shining silver pathway, in which the ship threaded its way. Lil presently leaned against the stern of the boat, drawing her shawl closely about her; she looked out on the glittering moonlight path—to her it seemed like the road to a new life, on which she was being hurried. She was so young that it appeared impossible that this new life should be other than one of poetry and happiness.



How beautiful it all was! the sky, the moonlight, and the golden waking dreams! Once she remembered that the railing she leaned on alone separated her from destruction, that the beautiful sea, now so peaceful, might become suddenly full of stormy terrors, that the future she pictured to herself as so fair might be full of disenchantments and dangers. She shivered slightly, and made an effort to change the current of her thoughts.

“ You are cold—put this about you.”

Lil started, she had heard no footsteps approaching her; but she smiled quite reassured when she recognized her table-companion.

“ Thanks!” she said, and allowed him to wrap a soft shawl about her; he did this seriously, but with a certain fatherliness, which, in another man, might have seemed

almost chivalrous. It was not till she had felt the comforting warmth of the wrap, that she perceived that it belonged to the young lady whose features she had the pleasure of studying every meal-time. Her companion understood her look.

“Yes,” he said coolly, “it is hers, I picked it up there;” and he pointed to a little pile of books and other objects which the careless girl had left at her accustomed place. “You don’t suppose I own such an affair as that? Do not take it off; it might as well keep you warm as protect her camp-stool from the night air.” She had never before heard him utter so many consecutive words; there was a little authoritative tone in his voice which made her afraid to disobey him; though she was in mortal terror lest the rightful owner of the shawl should come and claim her property.

Her new protector remained by her side, staring at the moonlight, but quite silent, enjoying his silence apparently, and perhaps also enjoying the young girl's embarrassment.

“What were you thinking about just now?” he at last said.

“I was wondering,” answered Lil dreamily, so glad to have some one to talk to, that she did not think of being prudently reticent; “I was wondering what my life would be—wondering whether this white path on the water, did not lead to some beautiful fairy-land. I so long for happiness!” she said, in a low passionate tone, quite forgetting to whom she was speaking: there are moments in life when one would pour out one’s confidences to a painter’s lay-figure, rather than keep them shut up in one’s heart.



“Humph!” grunted the stranger, “that’s all very nice and poetical, I suppose ; but I am not a poetical man myself. I suppose, in plain English, it means that you were wondering whether some young fellow, as beautiful as a prince in a fairy tale, and as rich—as rich as a Pennsylvania oil-man, would be so good as to fall in love with you, and marry you off-hand.”

Lil laughed a little, but did not answer, she rather wished the shaggy-browed man would go away and leave her to her half-conscious dreams ; after another short silence he pursued,—

“ You are not going the right way to find that desirable fellow ; why do you not go with the other girls, and flirt as they do ? there are some nice young men on board, whose shirts are immaculate, and whose neckties are faultless. Why

do you sit by yourself, and look frightened if any one speaks to you?"

"Did I look frightened when you offered me the pickles?" said Lil, with a malicious look: she did not care to answer the first part of his speech.

"No, but that's different; I am not a well-dressed beau; you would not think of flirting with me, I presume?"

"With you? O dear no!" answered Lil, with hearty conviction.

Her companion glanced at her from under his beetle brows, and seemed to enjoy her sincerity. At that moment, a clear, beautiful voice reached them—a rare voice, a little cold, perhaps—which harmonized marvellously with the moonlight and the cool clear air.

"Hark!" said Lil, "it is a mermaid!"

"It is the singing-woman from New

York," said he, more amused than ever ; he had a very disrespectful way of speaking of this prima-donna, who had won a world-wide fame, before she went to "do" the States. " Come down in the saloon and hear her ; all the company's there."

" Oh ! no," said Lil, shrinking back.

" Do not be afraid, I will take care of you ; no one need see two insignificant beings like us."

She allowed herself to be persuaded ; she was very fond of music, and her reveries had disposed her to enjoy it more than usual ; she followed her guide, and they slipped into reasonably good places without having attracted the least attention—every one was listening spell-bound to the wonderful singer. Lil, when she was once fairly in her seat, was glad she had allowed herself to be brought down,

she had had so few occasions of hearing any music during the past ten months, that her enjoyment was something pleasant to watch ; so at least her companion thought. He himself was much of the opinion that music “is a disagreeable noise which costs very dear,” so he directed all his attention to the study of Lil’s expressive face. Her greatest charm was perhaps her unconsciousness ; everything she felt, reflected itself instantly in her face ; she was what she was, in perfect simplicity.

“ So you think that very fine ? ” said the stranger to her, when the singing ceased.

“ Oh, yes ! ” answered Lil with a great sigh of satisfaction ; “ it makes me forget all sad and painful things. When I listen, it seems to me that life is very beautiful, and that there are no harsh or vulgar

things in it. I wish she could have gone on for ever ! ”

“ Is life, then, so hard a thing to you ? What can you, at your age, have suffered ? ”

Lil looked at him indignantly ; it seemed to her that her troubles were greater than any other troubles could be, and surely their mark must be stamped on her face. She said in a low voice,—

“ I lost my father and mother at two days' interval, not a year ago, and we were left penniless, my sister and I.”

“ Indeed ! ” There was a softening in the gruff voice, as though he were really sorry for her. “ Where is your sister ? ”

“ She stayed in Lakeville. We first tried keeping school, but that did not succeed, so she turned milliner.” Lil was determined not to palliate that dreadful fact.

“Brave girl, that! You preferred going into genteel bondage—seeing the world through prison bars, eh? The shop frightened you.”

She did not answer; it was taking a liberty so to judge her. She pretended to be much interested in the preparations for a dance which were going on about her. The stranger noticed her little hurt look, and smiled at it. There was a short pause; indeed the noise of dragging chairs and tables out of the way, the loud talking and laughing of the young people, made it difficult to keep up a conversation.

The young men chose their partners. The musician who had accompanied the prima-donna, good-naturedly sat down to the piano, and struck the first chords of a spirited waltz.

Lil remained unnoticed in her corner,

and she forgot her past indignation in the whirl of memories which came back to her. The last time she had heard that waltz she had been the centre of attraction, the belle of the ball, and Leigh Ward had scarcely left her side. Now—

“ I suppose you look forward to seeing Europe? Being an American girl, it is your bounden duty.”

She quite started as the rough voice once more sounded in her ears — her thoughts had been so far from the present.

“ Yes, certainly,” she answered, following the whirling couples with her eyes,

“ I wish I did. To me it is a dreadful bore; what do I know or care about pictures or broken-nosed statues, in long, wearisome galleries; I don’t approve of mouldy ruins, it is all waste of capital; if I had my way I would build nice new

houses on improved models, and sweep away all the Colosseums in the world."

Lil looked at him in horror; perhaps that was what he wanted, it was not amusing to see her lost in dreams.

"You may think those things, but you ought not to say them," she answered, with a little tone of superiority, which did not escape him.

"Oh! you won't betray me, any more than I will betray you; you see, I never should have come to Europe for my own pleasure; it is my confounded doctor's doing, he declared that I was killing myself with overwork. I dare say I shall do like all the rest; you may meet me, guide-book in hand, staring at a Rubens, or yawning over the antique; I shall do it, because it will be expected of me, because I shall be whirled along with thousands of my coun-



trymen, who “do” Europe manfully, stifling their natural longings for counting-house or office. I am already pining for my counting-house, it would be refreshing to take up a good thick ledger ; think of what I shall feel in two months ! O, those doctors, those doctors ! as though one could not be taken care of at home, rather than spend, heaven knows how much, to be bored into health ! ”

“ And many really cannot afford it,” said Lil, compassionately glancing at the shabby coat of the speaker. “ I have heard that travelling in Europe costs horribly ; of course I have not to trouble myself about it.”

“ But I have,” continued her new friend, “ think of my hard-earned dollars wrenched from me by oily-tongued Frenchmen, or glib Italians ? Strangers are dreadfully

fleeced, you know ; if I am very hard up may I apply to you ? you will give me your name and address, I am sure ; and if I am in want of a dinner you will share your earnings with me—the poor feel for the poor !”

“ If you depended on me, I should pity you,” laughed Lil. “ I possess just two dollars at this present moment, but at the end of the month I shall have something. Mind you only apply to me towards the 25th of each month.”

“ Thanks ! I shall remember.”

At that moment, the waltz having come to an end, quadrilles were being formed ; one young man was partnerless ; he glanced rapidly around the room, at the three or four girls sitting in wallflower expectancy, then advanced to Lil and asked her to do him the honour. . . . Lil blushed ; she wanted



sadly to dance, but she remembered Mrs. Cox's recommendation, and answered, "Thank you; I do not dance."

When the young gentleman had bowed himself away, the shaggy-browed man said curtly,—

"You wanted to say Yes. Why did you not?"

"Because—"

"That's a woman's answer; I expected better things from you; you have a quality not over-common with your sex—frankness. Why do you not speak openly, as you have done till now? is it because I offended you by praising your sister's conduct, rather than yours?"

"No."

"Then be candid with me. Why should you not dance and enjoy yourself? it belongs to your age, and you are the prettiest

girl here, take my word for it.” Lil glanced up quickly at him, the rough compliment did not displease her.

“ Why did you refuse that young fellow ? he is good-looking.”

“ Because I was afraid of forgetting in the pleasure of dancing—for I am very fond of it—that which I must not forget.”

“ Which is ?”

“ That I am not one of these gay people ; that I am a companion, a dependent ; that I have to earn my bread ; if I were to dance and enjoy myself, I should be apt to forget all this.”

“ And why should you not forget it when you can ?”

“ Because Mrs. Cox does not wish me too forget it.”

“ Mrs. Cox ! Mrs. Cox of Lakeville ? You are her companion ? I did not recognize

her when she came on board, she was so muffled up."

" You know her ? "

" Yes ; " then he added after a short silence, " you poor little girl ! "

" What do you mean ? " said Lil startled ; " Mrs. Cox is very good to me."

" So much the better ; say your best prayers that she may continue so." He said no more, and Lil presently rose to go.

" Will you not shake hands with me ? " asked her new friend. Lil frankly held out her hand ; he took it and held it in his a moment, then said, " I am a rough fellow, but I mean well. What's your name ? "

" Lil Temple."

" Thank you, I shall not forget it."

Lil did not report the whole of this conversation to Mrs. Cox.

At last the voyage came to an end. One

morning Lil rose to see the city of Havre gleaming in the sun. There was great bustle and flurry ; Mrs. Cox emerged from her long eclipse, as carefully dressed, as perfectly got up, as though she knew herself to be the observed of all observers. She was in good spirits, but required an enormous amount of attention and care from her companion. It was not till they were about to go ashore that Lil saw her dark-browed friend ; she then greeted him with a smile. Mrs. Cox looked up, and exclaimed,—

“ Why, Mr. Smith ! you on board ? I did indeed see the name, but—”

“ But it is not so uncommon a one that you should recognize any one in particular by it. Good-bye, Miss Temple, remember that if I am particularly hard up, I am to apply to you ! ” and so saying,

with a nod to the two ladies, he disappeared.

“So, that is your friend!” exclaimed Mrs. Cox, when he was fairly out of hearing; “I congratulate you, my dear; you have not lost your time, that is Barnard Smith of California; one of the three or four richest men of the United States—I doubt whether he himself knows how rich he is.”

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